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Voice from Europe

By Alyn Smith MEP

Alyn Smith is one of Scotland's six Members of the European Parliament. He is a member of the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee.

Is Theresa May ok?

BEING the Queen Bee sounds like a charmed life, on first glance. But a dysfunctional Queen creates a dysfunctional hive, and sometimes the beekeeper needs to take measures to replace her.

Which brings me to the question – *is Theresa May ok?* At the time of typing, the beleaguered Prime Minister has just sacked Alberto Costa MP, the Parliamentary Private Secretary of the (nominal) Secretary of State for Scotland David Mundell. Costa – no friend of EU nationals, having voted against their right to remain on 12 occasions – was presumably visited by three ghosts recently and tabled an amendment to secure reciprocal rights for EU citizens in the UK and UK citizens in the EU27. Apparently this is incompatible with his official role as PPS and so out he goes.

Now, politics should be a broad church, and I'm no fan of folk being expected to put party over country – heaven knows that's what got us into this mess. But a Prime Minister who can be so outmanoeuvred by a PPS is a weak PM, and not someone who should be at the helm of the country during a time of national crisis.

We've been told for years that Theresa is a cold, focused,

efficient woman, able to navigate the shark-filled waters of the Home Office by being an even bigger shark. I seem to remember one commentator declaring that "A grown-up is back in charge" – a comment that's aged about as well as the USSR on Trivial Pursuit cards. I veer between having sympathy for the woman, who's been held at bay by the Brextremists of her own party for the past few years, and frustration because this was all so avoidable. What kind of person would trigger Article 50 without a plan? What sort of person – who campaigned for Remain, knowing the benefits of EU membership – would be so keen to chuck it all away to pacify the kind of politicians who couldn't get a front bench role in literal decades of service? In terms of short-term thinking, it's like trying to out-sail a pirate ship by getting rid of your anchor.

What kind of person would trigger Article 50 without a plan?



BREXIT

And who was her alternative? Andrea Leadsom, a woman who looks like she'd be much happier pinning red A's on the less fortunate women of the parish. Where is the competent Tory replacement? Johnson may have the support of Nuts readers and his chums in the media, but to elect him wouldn't damage Britain's standing on the world stage as much as annihilate it entirely. Gove isn't trusted by his colleagues, and would find himself in the same situation as May. Patel's track record speaks for itself. I could go on, but I'd like to have one day where writing this column doesn't leave me in a pit of despair.

Theresa May just... isn't up to the job. Don't get me wrong, there's no 'good' Brexit, especially for Scotland. But as events go on, I'm beginning to think that there's something very wrong in Downing Street, and this maladjusted PM is responsible for it. Westminster is not the answer, and we do have another option.

Things I warned of two full years ago are now coming to pass, yet for every piece of economic bad news there is a squadron of useful idiots deployed to take to the airwaves to blame global events, the weather, the dog eating their homework ... anything. Anything but to accept the simple reality that Brexit has already made the UK, and for the moment Scotland with it, a less attractive place to invest.

I have devoted the last few years to trying to stop Brexit. Scotland's view is clear – we voted to remain within the European family and that has been my instruction. But as we approach

Westminster is not the answer, and we do have another option

the exit day more and more attention is going to the other potential answer to the Brexit shambles if, despite all our efforts, we cannot turn it around for the whole of the UK.

More and more people are asking me "when will there be another independence referendum?". Invariably I reply that there is no question of "if", it is only a question of "when" but that depends on a great many variables.

There's a false equivalence between Brexit and Scottish Independence being peddled by unionists, and I can only see that ramping up over the next while. Let's be clear – they are very, very different prospects. Scottish independence is about principle and practicalities both. When we offer change, we have to explain – seriously and in detail – how life will change and how it will stay the same. The Leave campaign is a textbook example of what happens when change is proffered without any detail or consideration.

In 2014, we put forward a realistic and detailed proposition for change. Now the landscape has shifted – after all, our proposal was predicated upon all the nations of these islands being in the EU! So Brexit means a new proposal. A proposal that must be based on reality, facts, and truth.

We have a land border with only one country, and in our interconnected world Brexit will still be relevant to us. And not all negatively, indeed an independent Scotland within the EU will be an incredibly attractive place to relocate to. Just how much more attractive has not yet dawned on many folk, but it will.

The good news is that we can already be certain of a great deal. Scottish independence will mean being part of the EU; it will mean being open and welcoming to anyone who chooses to make Scotland their home; it will mean ramping up our already substantial efforts in international development co-operation and helping those less fortunate; it will mean leading the way in clean, renewable energy; it will mean equal opportunities and access to healthcare and education for all our citizens. Any Brexit will be inferior.

So Brexit affects independence for now, we recognise that, but independence does not depend on and will in no way resemble Brexit. We have the chance for a better future than the one Westminster is offering us. We just need to keep our cool and not let them rattle us into haste.

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The Peat Dead

Islay. A peat-cutter's spade finds a human hand. A pointer to a crime. Inspector Angus Blue is sent from Oban to investigate. With the help of forensic archaeologist Alison Hendrickx, five corpses are revealed under the peat, unnamed victims of a ruthless killer. Blue builds his team: local police chief Moira Nicolson; ex-undercover agent Enver McCader; IT whizz Deirdra Craig; and car buff Arvind Bhardwaj.

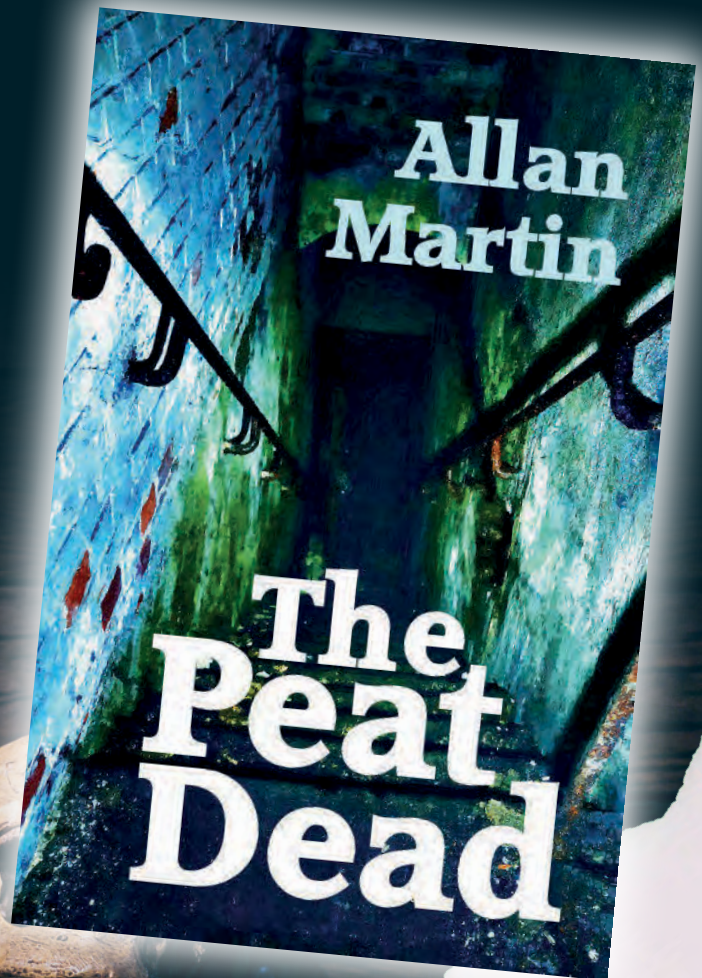
Evidence points to a connection with a wartime RAF base. Painstaking research and interviews with elderly residents bring the peat dead back to life.

But revealing their story is dangerous, and someone is seeking to close down the investigation and suppress a long-buried secret.

The Peat Dead. History doesn't go away.

Allan Martin's debut novel is a gripping page-turner, but also a reflection on the nature of history and of the political order. It's set in authentic locations on the island of Islay and in Glasgow.

The Peat Dead will be published on 17th April by ThunderPoint Publishing (www.thunderpoint.co.uk). For more about Allan's work, go to www.allanmartin.scot.



PRAISE FOR THE PEAT DEAD FROM CRIME WRITERS:

"This atmospheric crime novel set on Islay gripped me from the start. A book that shows decades-old crimes cast long shadows."

Sarah Ward

"A mystery so redolent of its island setting that you practically smell the peat and whisky on the pages."

Douglas Skelton



The Dinwoodie Interview



by Robbie Dinwoodie

SHE COMES from the city that Germans joke is so bland it doesn't exist, she's a historian and expert on migration and diasporas, describes herself as "an affinity Scot with a Kiwi twist", and has become a champion of the rights of EU citizens living in the UK who face the looming nightmare of Brexit.

Professor Tanja Bueltmann is by turns angry, exasperated, indignant and at times quite funny although, for her, the impending loss of rights of 3.6 million of her fellow Europeans living in the UK or indeed 1.2 million Britons living on the Continent is anything but a laughing matter. She saw Brexit coming, accurately predicting the outcome of the referendum when most experts did not, but she never believed that a country like Britain would descend into using EU citizens as bargaining chips.

The Professor of History at Northumbria University is incandescent at the very idea of a registration process for EU citizens living in the UK. As she puts it on the EU Citizens' Champion website, "Forced to apply to stay in your own home? Shameful doesn't get any more shameful than that."

So we discuss how she became a professor in Newcastle, her working class background in Germany, how she came to see herself as an "affinity Scot" researching our diaspora, and how the Brexit saga has forced her to look afresh at notions of British tolerance and competence. She was born in Bielefeld in the part of North-west Germany oddly named as East Westphalia. Although it is a bigger city than Aberdeen or Dundee, Bielefeld is considered by Germans such a bland place that in the early days of the internet a running joke emerged that the city did not actually exist, the Bielefeld Conspiracy.

"Yes," she says. "I'm from the city that doesn't exist." And because she came from a "very working class family" she also attended university in her home city, which is a byword for localism in a very German way. "Rootedness is important in that part of Germany and my family was very much like that. It's the kind of place where your idea of the best holiday is in your own garden, which perhaps explains a number of things about me. I couldn't really tell you why but I guess I'm a bit of an odd one out in my family."

Many Germans have a Walter Scott-inspired romantic view of Scotland as a place of mountains, tartan and heather but that was not Bueltmann's background. Instead, her first involvement came as part of a gap year between school and university and her own approach to sexual equality. A rather principled young Tanja thought it was unfair that German men were forced to do either a year of military service or a year of social service but that this did not apply to women.

"I thought if I wanted equality then that's not right, so I forced myself to make that choice." So she decided to volunteer to do a year of social service and ended up working at a care home for the disabled in the Colinton area of Edinburgh. She drove to the Netherlands, crossed on the ferry to Newcastle and then up to the home in the foothills of the Pentlands. "I got out of the car and knocked on the door and someone who lived there answered. She didn't say anything at all, just gave me a hug. It's like a metaphor for the way Scotland embraced me. It genuinely reflects what I still feel today when I step off the train at Waverley Station I feel very much at home."

She befriended other volunteers in the home, got to know Edinburgh well on her days off and during her holiday breaks that year, instead of going home to the Rhineland she travelled extensively in her adopted country, with Ullapool in Wester Ross, becoming her favourite part of Scotland. Returning to attend university in her home city she ran up against some complex bureaucracy and had to study history as a secondary subject because she didn't have latin, so she majored in British cultural studies.

Then in the middle of her five years she did an Erasmus year and returned to Edinburgh, again running up against odd rules which initially stopped overseas students studying Scottish history as they may not have had a grounding in the subject. I pointed out that many Scots also felt they did not get much of a grounding in the subject at school. But a glitch at Edinburgh University meant all her course applications were lost. "They were terribly apologetic and basically said, we're really sorry, choose whatever you like, so I seized the moment and said can I please do all these Scottish history courses?"

In the early days of the internet a running joke emerged that the city did not actually exist, the Bielefeld Conspiracy

The Scottish Diaspora



Tanja Bueltmann, Andrew Hinson
and Graeme Morton

With the approval of the lecturers involved that's what she did and she soon found a recurring theme across periods of history, including the Highland Clearances, of Scots moving abroad as permanent migrants, traders, mercenaries, bureaucrats of the British Empire and sojourners hoping to make their fortune and one day return. The subject of diaspora had her hooked and when she finished her degree in Bielefeld in 2005 she cast around for a way to do a PhD in migration and diaspora studies, looking to places where Scots had gone in their droves – Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Victoria University of Wellington offered her the chance to study the impact of the Scots Diaspora on the development of New Zealand and she spent 2006-09 there, her thesis later published as *Scottish Ethnicity and the making of New Zealand Society, 1850 to 1930*. She had been to New Zealand for a lengthy holiday before, but her three years in Wellington really warmed her to the country. "I really do love New Zealand. It's very much like my relationship with Scotland," she said. She has since written or co-written several books on diasporas.

She was so determined to get the job that she turned up to the interview with two suitcases containing all her belongings



When her spell in Wellington ended a decade ago, she found herself looking for a job in the UK and an opening came up at the University of Northumbria. She was so determined to get the job that she turned up to the interview with two suitcases containing all her belongings. The post was as a researcher but it soon led to a lecturer job and in due course to her being appointed as Professor of History. Then the European referendum loomed and she found her worst fears confirmed. She knew in her bones that England was turning in on itself and away from Europe.

"When Cameron was re-elected I wrote to a friend that if he held a European referendum he would lose it," said Bueltmann. "That was way before he even called a date. I take no comfort in being proved right but I never doubted at any time that it was going to be a leave vote. It was a time when so many people, more clearly in this



region than in some others, saw no hope and just wanted to give the system a telling off. It was a combination of people suffering under austerity wanting to take a stand coupled with decades of lies about the EU. This didn't start during the referendum campaign. Boris Johnson as a correspondent had spun this kind of nonsense, not just nonsense but utter crap, for years."

Project Fear had worked for Cameron during the independence referendum and he wrongly thought he could pull the same trick to fight Brexit. She said: "It's not a secret that I am for Scottish independence. I haven't always been but I was very convinced by the arguments that were made during the referendum campaign. I think they are even more compelling now. When it came to the European referendum it wasn't even scaremongering, because we can see now that it's all coming true, but the trouble is a positive case for the EU was not made."

*He wrongly
thought he could
pull the same trick
to fight Brexit*

One thing that became very clear to her when Cameron called the referendum was that Brexit would be an absolute catastrophe for the university sector, so she set up a group called Academics for Europe. "I had only ever had one rule on Twitter and that was not to do politics, so obviously that went right out the window at that point. I was making these little videos about why I believed in the EU and trying to make the positive case for Europe, but soon I was getting crap on social media, as lots of campaigners do, especially women. There was a UKIP guy who kept plastering my face over



fake stories on Twitter and tagging my employer, although compared to what I get now that was peanuts. The university has been very supportive of me.

"At the time it felt really bad and I was about to call it a day as I'd had enough of it. I prepared one last Tweet and it went viral, doubling the number of my followers and made me think, I can't stop now, how silly would that be?"

This was around the time of the murder of Labour MP Jo Cox and Bueltmann resolved to make one last campaigning push to try to avoid a Brexit win, to no avail. "I think my experience of the 24th of June was fundamentally different to that of most colleagues. I take no comfort in this but a lot of people who had told me not to be so negative because it would be fine in the end were now freaking out, and I felt sorry for them. But I also thought, you dismissed my view so quickly. It wasn't a finger-wagging exercise at them but I did say to some, this is what happens if you don't listen."

Since then her focus has been on the rights of EU citizens living in the UK, founding the EU Citizens' Champion campaign last summer. She believes that leaving 3.6 million people in limbo because of a flawed registration process which strips them of existing rights

is unconscionable and she pins the blame squarely on Theresa May. "It is her personal obsession that is driving this, in my view, because she was the one who prevented David Cameron from issuing a unilateral guarantee, which would have been a really good start and set a positive tone, and she was the one standing against it.

"Then in her leadership campaign she said our rights would have to be part of the negotiations with Europe. For me, this all comes from the same place as her time as Home Secretary and the hostile environment for immigrants. Maybe she genuinely doesn't like immigrants. I have no idea but some of her language suggests that, and we know that at every single turn where she had a choice she chose the route that would make it worse for us."

She points out that it only takes one slip-up in the registration process to wreck your future at some point down the line. Some people are being given a pre-settled status which has a time stamp on it meaning they have to jump through hoops at some point down the line, again with potentially disastrous consequences. "I suspect the majority of people who apply will eventually get settled status but even if only one percent don't get it we're talking about huge numbers," she said. Her other fear is that all of this is being done via secondary legislation, so can be readily changed in the future without going fully through Parliament. It is estimated that in recent years more than fifty changes have been made to other aspects of immigration law through simply altering regulations. The environment could be made more hostile very easily.

For Bueltmann the process of applying for settled status involves signing away existing rights and she finds that unacceptable. She is now looking at applying for British citizenship. "I know three people who have already left the UK because of the whole idea of having to apply to stay in your own home when you are already here legally. It's just not acceptable to them. I can't disagree with that."

*The environment
could be made
more hostile very
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Our TOXIC and Hostile

I WAS STANDING room only in the Kilmarnock Yes Shop on Titchfield Street when my talking tour began at the end of January. Looking out over the audience there were a few familiar faces – some family members, one or two retired teachers from my school days, and others who knew me from childhood. The atmosphere was warm and welcoming, and why wouldn't it be? Kilmarnock is, after all, my home town. Support for independence here was significant in 2014 and since then the town has comprehensively rejected Labour – the British unionist party which had held the Kilmarnock and Loudoun Westminster constituency since the creation of the seat.

What had not occurred to me was quite how unwelcome this tour was to the unionist political and media establishment in our country. Moments before the Kilmarnock talk was scheduled to start, a “freelance journalist” approached me with some questions at the front door. Apparently Maree Todd, an SNP MSP from the Highlands and Islands, had branded my opinions “abhorrent” and apologised for supporting my planned visit to Invergordon in March. The very next day, before speaking in Airdrie, the *Daily Mail* could barely contain its excitement as it blasted me as a “hate-filled blogger” and an IRA sympathiser.

Despite my comment to this journalist and to two more the next day, that “I’m a pacifist and a devout Christian and [that] I don’t want Ireland to return to violence,” by the end of the third day of the tour it was apparent

the British nationalist press was out to get me. Where I had said on social media that the British government’s reintroduction of soldiers to the north of Ireland would result in elements of the armed Irish Republican movement resuming their war – again treating these British soldiers as “legitimate targets,” the *Daily Mail* and *The Herald* were falsely touting my support. *The Scotsman* did exactly the same and added to this the horrific accusation of Holocaust denial.

A year ago, I had published a piece on my *Random Public Journal* website stating exactly what Noam Chomsky, Ilan Pappé, and Shlomo Sand – all accomplished Jewish academics – have said before; that the State of Israel is using a distorted narrative of the Holocaust to legitimise its treatment of the Palestinian people. Stretching what I had written as far as it would possibly go, *The Scotsman* actually printed, with the assistance of a single-word quote, that I had described the Holocaust as “fiction.” This paper was quick to remove this preposterous nonsense from its online article when I tweeted a link to an 18-page essay I had published in 2012 on *Academia.edu* while lecturing on the systematic murder of the Hungarian Jews at Auschwitz-Birkenau. The Conservatives have long exploited the accusations of antisemitism and Holocaust denial as a favoured tactic in their smear campaigns against political opponents, but here at least – thanks to lazy journalism – it fell flat.

Nothing of this, however, stopped Tory MSPs Edward Mountain and Jackson Carlaw citing my “antisemitism” and support of violence to bully their local pro-independence groups into cancelling my visit to them, leading to the suspicion that this was the intention of the articles. Given the preponderance of former Tory politicians who are now editors and writers in the Westminster-aligned print media and the revolving door that exists between the Conservative political and media establishments in the United Kingdom, one can be forgiven for assuming a certain degree of collusion. It is certainly not difficult to imagine a situation in Britain in which the media, with a nudge and a wink, manufactures politically useful “alternative facts” which are in turn utilised as weapons by unionist parties and politicians against their opponents and those deemed by the establishment to be a real and present danger to the integrity of the British state.

By the end of the third day of the tour it was apparent the British nationalist press was out to get me

by Jason Michael McCann
Twitter @Jeggit



Environment





Jackson Carlaw



Certainly, it was this same pattern – a mere “conspiracy theory” of course – that we saw in operation against former SNP politicians Michelle Thomson, Alex Salmond, and Corrie Wilson. Powerful alternative media voices in the independence movement, including bloggers Stu Campbell of *Wings Over Scotland* and Gareth Wardell of *Grouse Beater*, have been subjected to the very same. In each instance the Westminster-aligned mainstream media has distorted facts, prejudicially reported on unproven accusations, or told outright lies which have all proven suspiciously convenient for their allies in the unionist political establishment. That this never happens in the other direction – even when Conservative politicians have been accused of sexual assault and child abuse, and even convicted of consuming child pornography, makes it obvious; there is indeed a conspiracy. Backchannels between the unionist political establishment and the unionist press are being exploited in order to smear and damage pro-independence politicians and activists.

If the unionists have you on their hit-list they will find something, and, if they can't, they will make it up

It is impossible, in such an environment where the media is being employed as a political tool, for independentistas – elected politicians and activists – to remain above reproach. Truth is the first casualty in every conflict. What the newspapers and the television news report and what the unionist politicians use of it as ammunition does not need to be the truth. Time and again we have seen this cosy relationship produce distortions, misrepresentations, and downright fabrications as facts. The only real fact to those of us who are campaigning for Scottish independence is that if the unionists have you on their hit-list they will find something, and, if they can't, they will make it up.

We have come to expect this from the media, from the Tories, from Labour, and from the Liberal Democrats, but what is perhaps most frustrating is our own inability – as a movement – to stand up to these tactics and defend those who fall prey to them. Not only did Maree Todd readily accept the report to her from the *Daily Mail* of my “hate-filled” and “abhorrent” opinions, she has not, to date, even gone as far as *The Scotsman* and amended her statement. She has not even replied to the email I sent her (dated 1 February) in which I apologised for the predicament she was put in and in which I said “my actual record is available for [her] to read and judge.” She, along with a good number of elected SNP politicians, simply distanced herself from me – thus lending credence to the demonstrably outrageous assertions and lies published by the unionist press.

Ms Todd, as has been said, was not alone in fleeing the scene. In fact, we have come to expect this too. The SNP, from what we have seen in its behaviour in all of these instances, has adopted what looks like a policy of rapidly distancing itself from any hint of scandal, no matter how flimsy the basis of the accusation. The natural consequence of this ill-thought defence is that, by continually giving ground to spurious accusations and lies, it continually loses ground. Over time, as one politician or activist is picked off after another, both the party and the movement are inadvertently advancing this anti-democratic unionist project of silencing pro-independence voices. No doubt too this SNP policy is what the editors of these newspapers are banking on.

Ultimately, this failure on the part of the SNP – which includes its inability to fully grasp the nefarious purposes of the state broadcaster, the BBC – is having a deeply corrosive effect on the whole movement. Both Gareth Wardell and myself have received a massive outpouring of support from the grassroots of the independence movement, but – and



Perth, March 2019

speaking only for myself – I have received no small number of messages from Yes group organisers and members airing their discomfort at how the SNP is handling the media, and especially with how it is prepared to abandon falsely accused independence-supporting politicians and writers so exposed to its lies and manipulations. Neither does it help matters that, on the ground, the SNP has been distancing itself from the Yes movement. In many cases we are hearing reports of SNP councillors, MSPs, and MPs visiting their local Yes hubs only for photo-ops and, sometimes, never at all.

It is clearer now than ever it was in the past that the independence movement is advancing the case for independence in a toxic and hostile environment. We are doing this, as a movement, with vastly fewer resources than the British state has at its disposal, and with much less money. Paul Kavanagh, one of our most influential writers, told me the reward for his tireless efforts was less than he would make on the dole. Considering the threat to our reputations and our careers posed by the British state-aligned media, someone would have to be nuts to do what we do – *but still we do it*. All we have going for us and for the cause of independence we espouse is our belief in Scottish independence and our togetherness. Without the support of every part of the movement – especially that of the political leadership of the movement – we begin to come undone.

Let us not imagine for a moment that anything written here is not already known to our unionist political adversaries. They know fine well how fragile political movements can be. This is not the first time Britain has faced a powerful independence campaign. The people in Whitehall and Fleet Street are perfectly aware that independence cannot be

All we have going for us and for the cause of independence we espouse is our belief in Scottish independence and our togetherness

won by a single political party or a few disparate activists, campaigners, and writers. Britain knows from its experience in India and Ireland that independence relies on a broad-based mass movement of determined and politicised parties, people, activists, campaigners, and writers. It knows too the value for Britain and the British state of breaking these movements up into squabbling factions.

We have reached a critical moment in the campaign for independence. It looks increasingly likely now that the United Kingdom will crash, *sans* deal, out of the European Union on the 29 March. After this date independence, for many reasons, will become more difficult. The British government knows this. Our friends in Europe know this. It is high time that we realised this also. If we are to be an effective and successful movement, then we must realise right now that unity of purpose and movement solidarity – in every part of the movement – are absolutely essential. We can no longer afford for the SNP to pretend its aloofness. It is an integral and hugely important component in this struggle. But neither it nor any part the grassroots can win alone. We need the support of the SNP as much as it needs us. It is time to sort this out.

A breakaway



by James Kelly

OVER RECENT months there has been just very occasional murmuring from a few SNP members, who are disgruntled by the shabby treatment of Grouse Beater or frustrated by the repeated kicking down the road of the indyref can, about the vague possibility of leaving the party in the hope of finding a more full-blooded pro-independence alternative. But those members

The Gang of Four had attempted to slay a Labour Party that they felt had been irretrievably captured by the left

now, with the creation of the new Independent Group at Westminster, have two cautionary tales from recent history that strongly suggest staying in your party and fighting your corner is a much better idea. The first of those tales was of course the creation in 1981 of the Social Democratic Party, which in spite of holding immense advantages that the Independent Group can only dream of (such as four founding members with Cabinet experience, including two who had occupied Great Offices of State), failed to break the two-party system and instead handed a radical right-wing Tory party a landslide majority on a plate in 1983 due to a centre-left vote that was needlessly split almost down the middle. The SDP's stated aim was a revolution of moderation, but they in fact delivered the Thatcherite Revolution.

It didn't even end there. Part of the reason for the SDP's failure was the refusal of a large chunk of Labour's right-wing to move across to the new party. The young Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, first elected to parliament in 1983 under Michael Foot's leadership, would self-evidently have been more at home in the SDP at that stage, but they were ultimately careerists and calculated that they and their creed would have a brighter future by staying in Labour and biding their time. And that caution paid off handsomely. When Blair finally displaced the Tories from office in 1997, Shirley Williams attempted to reframe the SDP's failure as success by suggesting that her party had managed to weaken Labour to such an extent that Labour had no alternative but to turn to the right-wingers who had stayed behind, and reinvent itself in the SDP's image. So, in a sense, Williams was impudently arguing that the SDP had been elected to government a decade-and-a-half late, although she added almost as an afterthought that New Labour was "just a little to the right of the SDP". Those words proved to be prophetic, as she and many of her former SDP colleagues ended up spending the Blair years furiously attacking the Labour government from the left. The Gang of Four had attempted to slay a Labour Party that they felt had been irretrievably captured by the left, but instead achieved the seemingly impossible by creating a Labour party that, for most of them, was unacceptably right-wing. And that was after accidentally giving us fourteen more years of Thatcherite rule from the Tories. Reflecting on that little lot, we'd have been justified in rechristening the law of unintended consequences as "the SDP's law".



that could take Scottish Labour out of the game for good



SDP Gang of Four

Chuka Harrison Umunna MP



Richard Leonard,
MSP Labour leader Scotland



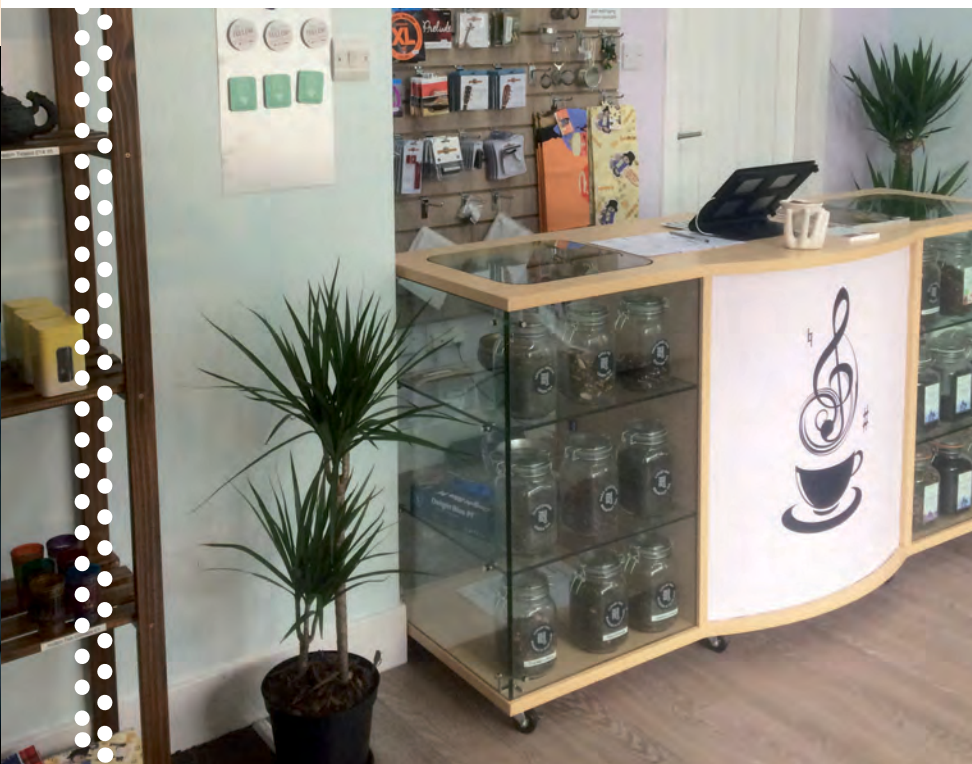
The Independent Group are not predestined to meet the SDP's fate, but the early indications are not encouraging for them. In spite of the fact that more Tories have thrown in their lot with a Labour breakaway than was the case in 1981, the first batch of opinion polls suggest that they have only succeeded in weakening Labour in relation to the Tories, without coming close to disrupting – let alone busting – the two-party system that still operates in England. The first poll to include the Independent Group as an option on a proper voting intention question put them at a pitiful 6%, which might well see every single one of them losing their seats – something that not even the SDP managed. And as far as unintended consequences are concerned, it's virtually impossible to imagine how the Labour party could ever be refashioned in such a way that it becomes intolerably right-wing to unreconstructed Blairities such as Chuka Umunna and Chris Leslie. We're already seeing signs that the breakaway could produce the opposite effect on Brexit than was intended. It's succeeded in forcing Jeremy Corbyn to finally embrace a "People's Vote", but only because he's secure in the knowledge that his grudging support is unlikely to cause such a vote to actually be held. And it's succeeded in forcing Theresa May to contemplate for the first time requesting an

extension of Article 50, but only in a form that might actually make a No Deal exit more likely. With the safety blanket of a possible extension, wavering MPs may no longer feel sufficient pressure to vote the draft Brexit deal through. And even if the EU then agree to a short postponement of Brexit (far from certain), it's likely to be the only extension that is ever possible, because May seems hellbent on ensuring that no British MEPs are elected in time for the opening session of the new European Parliament in early July. Thanks to the Independent Group, we could now be heading for a cliff-edge in June with no further option to stop off for a prolonged sandwich break. And then all we'll have to look forward to is the eventual re-election of an anti-European Tory government with a strengthened mandate, courtesy of the Independent Group splitting the centre-left, pro-European vote.

But before we become too despondent, we should remember that because the "SNP civil war" proved to be largely a figment of journalists' imaginations, and because the Labour civil war proved to be very real indeed, an intact SNP can now confidently expect to reap the indirect benefits of the Labour breakaway in Scotland in much the same way that the Tories can in England. The early straws in the wind suggest that, when the Independent Group are added to the polling mix in Scotland, the state of play in the SNP v Tory battle remains broadly unchanged, but the Labour vote drops markedly. Essentially the Independent Group look set to send nearly all of Labour's seven Scottish seats gift-wrapped to the SNP, while posing no credible threat to the SNP themselves.

It's no exaggeration to say that the breakaway could be the event that finally takes Scottish Labour out of the game, and leaves Scottish politics as a straight fight between a left-of-centre pro-independence party, and a right-of-centre unionist party. And in that fight there would only ever be one winner.

Thanks to the Independent Group, we could now be heading for a cliff-edge in June with no further option to stop off for a prolonged sandwich break



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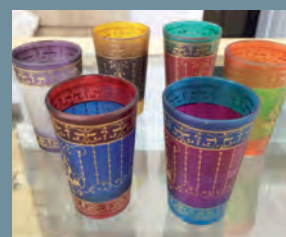
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Stick or

IF YOU look in the dictionary for a definition of remote, there's probably a photograph of Balchrack! Located around 3 miles north-west of Kinlochbervie and 10 miles south-west of Cape Wrath, Balchrack is over 500 miles away from London yet only 250 miles from the Faroe Islands. It also happens to be around 650 miles away from Brussels, which will become significant later in this story...

For the past 10 years Balchrack has been home to Patricia 'Trish' Goossens, her Flemish husband Frans

He contracted peritonitis and, technically, died on the operating table

and her 34-year-old daughter Alice. Perhaps unusual, given its remote and rugged location, but Trish specifically moved there from her Orkney croft seeking "better weather"! Trish and Frans got married in Ullapool in 2012, and the family has lived a happy and simple life in their rural idyll, complete with chickens and sheepdog Bran, despite a number of health challenges. This lifestyle is funded solely by Frans' lifetime disability benefit, which he was awarded by the Belgian government in 2006 after he contracted peritonitis and, technically, died on the operating table. Trish is Frans' principal carer and has her own serious health issues, suffering from COPD, heart arrhythmia and osteoarthritis. She also cares for Alice, who has Asperger's Syndrome. Despite being one of the majority of Scots who voted to remain in the EU in 2016, as soon as the result was known Trish could sense that there may be problems ahead. Not even her worst fears could have prepared her for what was to come.

Once it became obvious that EU citizens' continuing rights were going to be used as a bargaining chip by the UK Government in the EU withdrawal negotiations, Trish decided to contact the Belgian authorities for clarification of their circumstances.

*Balchrack is remote!
Photo credit: Trish Goossens*

twist?

by Gordon
Craigie



It wasn't a straightforward process due to the technical definition of Frans' benefit and the absence of any real discussions on reciprocal safeguards for people in their situation. Trish has documented her fight to retain Frans's benefit and to keep their family together in her blog, www.scottishexile.home.blog, and it's not for the faint-hearted or easily offended. She has also mounted a relentless letter, email and social media campaign in a superhuman effort to get the answers that anybody in her situation needs in order to either take action or make major life decisions. Her Twitter account, @siannamacdonald, is particularly hard-hitting and when Trish takes aim at politicians and bureaucrats, she disnae miss them! The upshot is that, at the time of writing this, she is now a matter of days from embarking on a heart-breaking journey with Frans, leaving Alice behind, that she sees as her only chance of securing their future. Possibly...

The fundamental problem, of course, lies in the Brexit omnishambles created by the Westminster government. It's actually irrelevant whether you believe the UK, or Scotland, should leave the EU or not, but the lack of clarity and complete absence of any rational plan almost 3 years after the 'advisory' referendum surely defies all credibility. The result of this is that we stand on the precipice of the much-discussed but not-at-all-understood 'no deal' scenario and in that eventuality, well, we simply don't know what we don't know! In Trish's situation, here's what she appears to know as of the second week in March:

When Trish takes aim at politicians and bureaucrats, she disnae miss them!

- In the event of 'no deal', the Belgian government will immediately suspend her husband's benefit payment unless he is still resident in an EU country (i.e. not the UK!).

- If they do nothing, like every other EU national currently residing in the UK, Frans would have to apply for 'settled status' in the UK with no guarantee of acceptance.

- As soon as Frans's Belgian disability payment stops the family have no income whatsoever.

- In order for the UK government to consider financial support for their situation, should 'settled status' be granted, all three would have to subject themselves to DWP interrogation, with no guarantee of any positive outcome.



Bran, the family
sheepdog Photo credit:
Trish Goossens



Frans and Trish
Photo credit: Alice Rozen

Early in February, Trish concluded that they'd arrived at a decisive moment in their struggle. The *Riziv*, the Belgian National Institute for Health and Disability Insurance, which is the body responsible for Frans's disability payment, had written to say that: "In [the] absence of an international agreement, Belgian national law foresees that invalidity benefits are only payable to beneficiaries residing in Belgium (territoriality principle). The fact that the beneficiary is actually considered invalid according to Belgian legislation till pensionable age does not constitute a legal exception to this principle." The email included some other ifs/buts/maybes, as the Belgian government were clearly trying to account for whatever decisions the UK government may or may not reach, (and how exactly can they legislate on a moving target?), but that quoted section appears fairly definitive. So, the family decided that in order to safeguard their sole income, and also guarantee Frans's continuing medical treatment, they would have to move to Belgium before 29 March. They have also been advised that should there be any interruption to Frans's eligibility to his benefit payment then his pension rights will also be adversely affected. To this outside observer, the Belgian government position doesn't seem entirely logical – if they have already accepted responsibility for their citizen's disability benefit and medical treatment, what difference does his location make? On the other hand, they haven't caused this clusterboursch.

Anyway, for better or worse, having made the decision to leave, the practicalities of the move had to be addressed and plans made. First problem – Alice doesn't have a passport. She has never been abroad before and has never therefore needed one. Trish was advised that, under regulations brought into force in 2008, Alice would be required to attend a personal interview at HM Passport Office Glasgow. They subsequently discovered that photo ID would be required in order to gain

In order to safeguard their sole income, and also guarantee Frans's continuing medical treatment, they would have to move to Belgium before 29 March

access to the building – the only form of photo ID that seemed feasible was to obtain a provisional driving licence, but the turnaround time on that is up to 3 weeks meaning that there is no chance of the family receiving that and being able to fit in a trip to Glasgow before they have to leave for Belgium. So, despite the understandable worry of leaving Alice behind on her own, the family priorities dictate that their income and medical assistance for Frans has to be secured first.

Trish and Frans plan to travel to Belgium on 20 March leaving Alice at home alone for around 3–4 months, hopefully long enough to establish Belgian residency, until Trish can come back to complete Alice's passport application process. Even at this point the family will not be able to afford to transport their daughter, possessions and dog to Belgium and Trish will again have to leave her daughter behind until she manages to raise the funds required to complete the move. She worries about how Alice will cope alone – the nearest shop and GP is in Kinlochbervie, 3 miles away – but feels she literally has no choice except to hope for the best.

Trish explains the route they will have to take to travel to Belgium due to both medical and financial considerations: "We'll take the local taxi to Kinlochbervie, then wait for the minibus to Lairg. After that it's the train to Inverness, where we'll wait all day for the Caledonian Sleeper to leave that night. Next day, from London Euston we have to take a taxi (both of us have health issues so walking for any length of time is out of the question) to St Pancras, then the Eurostar to Brussels, train to Antwerp then bus to Hoevenan where Frans' cousin, Gunther, lives. It's a 2-day journey, and one I wish we weren't making. But train is the cheapest way to go for us. Otherwise, to fly, even with cheapish plane tickets, we can't do the journey in a single day without an overnight stop at the nearest place to the airport, which is too costly." Once they reach Belgium their short-term plan is to stay with cousin Gunther until they get whatever can be sorted out, sorted out.

And then? Trish knows she has no guarantee of acquiring Belgian citizenship so there may be the same situation waiting for her again somewhere down the line. Until Brexit has either happened or not, and until (or if!) every country's rules and regulations settle down again into some kind of normality, nobody knows what lies ahead.



Hamel Photo credit: Trish Goossens

Families are being torn apart and it's particularly galling for this to be happening in a country that voted to remain in the EU. Trish's UK passport expires next year and she worries she may not get a renewal, effectively becoming stateless. Whether this fear is justified or not, given everything else that is happening around her it's easy to empathise with her concern. As a lifelong believer in Scottish independence she fervently wishes for a Scottish passport but also fears for her country: "[Scotland's] chance of achieving freedom shrinks with each passing day, as May comes closer to abolishing the Human Rights Act and Holyrood soon after. We would have voted Yes again, us three, but instead I'll be in a foreign land and away from home and family and I don't know if my heart will ever recover from this. I am broken by it. The past 2 years has been hell for us, and for others like us."

So, who is to blame for this predicament and what can be done to resolve it? The only people entirely blameless in this are the Goossens family, who are the innocent victims of a political shambles. The only people with the direct authority to resolve it are, presumably, the DWP and Riziv – can they not individually or collectively just 'fix' it? If there was a genuine will, maybe. What about the Scottish Government or the EU itself? Neither are directly responsible, obviously, but again either unilaterally or collectively could some organisation not come up with some humanitarian fund to cater for the situations where vulnerable citizens are in danger of falling through the cracks? The UK government can come up with millions at extremely short notice to cover up any of 'Grayling's failings', or to 'bribe' the DUP or English Labour councils, so why not a contingency fund for the unintended victims of their stupidity?

This entire debacle was started by Westminster, by David Cameron, a Tory toff playing games within his own party before scuttling off as soon as he realised the miscalculation he'd made. It was fuelled by xenophobic right-wingers like Farage, Johnson, Gove et al. who lied to the English population over many years, resulting in a 'leave' vote that nobody, least of all them, expected. But for their narrow win, 52-48, in a non-binding advisory referendum to be translated into a premature triggering of an Article 50 2-year withdrawal period justified only by some 'will of the people' gobbledegook? Well, anyone who doesn't believe there are other forces at work here probably shouldn't be

The only people entirely blameless in this are the Goossens family, who are the innocent victims of a political shambles

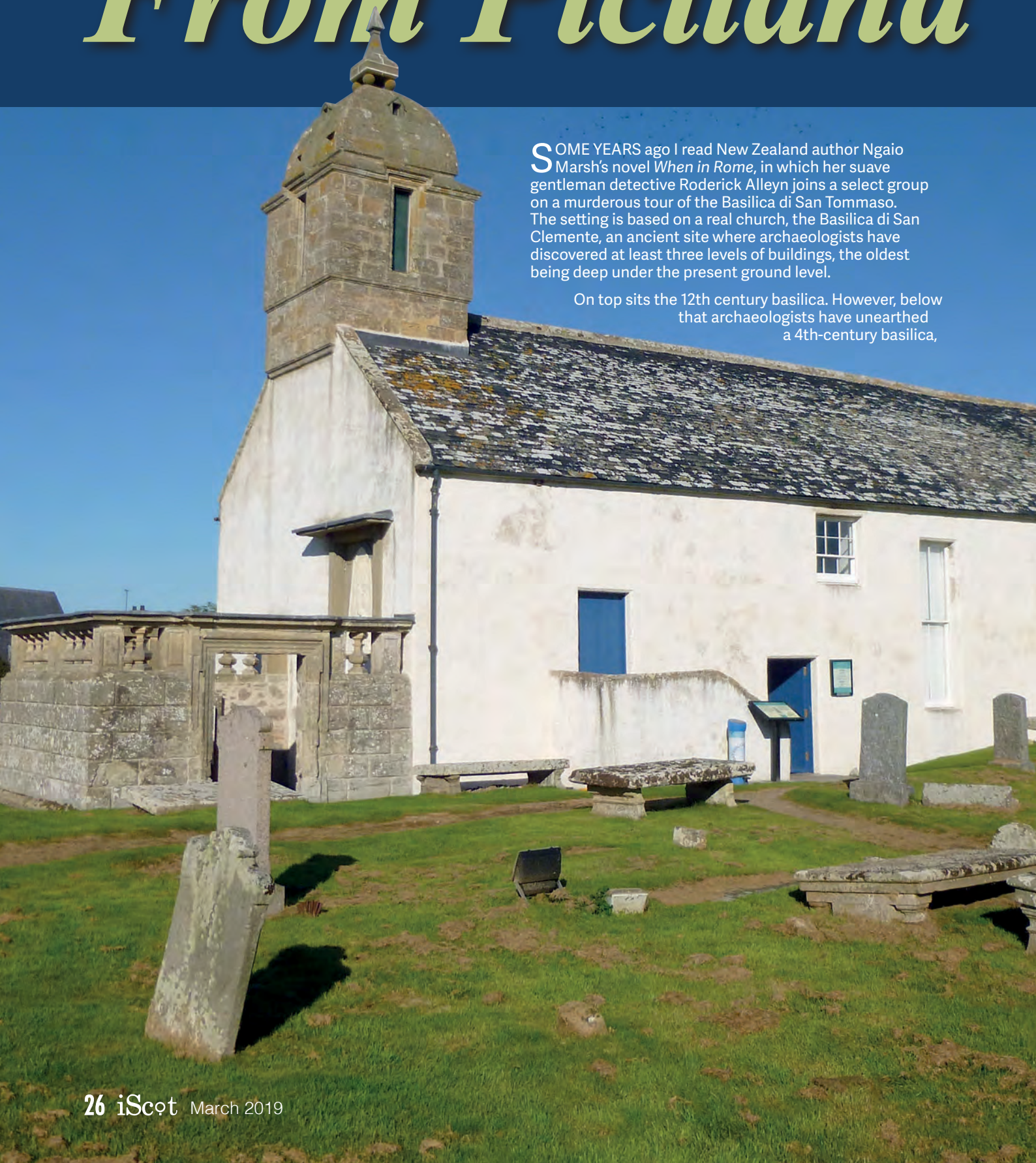
allowed to vote ever again! Scotland still has a way out of this chaos, but it may come too late for the Goossens family and many others in similar situations. And that really is tragic.

Should Trish, Frans and Alice stay or go? *If I go, there will be trouble, And if I stay it will be double...* Consider the enormity of this course of action: a woman, not in the best of health herself, feels she has to decide between fulfilling her role as principal carer to her seriously ill husband or her role as mother to a vulnerable daughter. Even if a magic wand was waved today guaranteeing their income and allowing them to stay in their home in Balchrick, does it make up for the last 2 years of stress and worry? Frans' already serious health issues have worsened, as have Trish's. In fact, she is having to postpone some important medical tests and cannot contemplate further treatment until she has resolved the family's current predicament. Alice has become even more vulnerable due to the added stress and uncertainty and has been prescribed anti-depressants during the course of this politically motivated disaster. Trish will also be leaving behind another two daughters and five grandchildren. The cards dealt to the Goossens family have not been kind, even before this new game was imposed on them with its ever-changing or non-existent or completely irrational rules. The politicians at every level are telling them to 'stick', but why should they trust them? Trish has gambled everything on 'twist' – in her situation, what would you do?

What lies *From Pictland*

SOME YEARS ago I read New Zealand author Ngaio Marsh's novel *When in Rome*, in which her suave gentleman detective Roderick Alleyn joins a select group on a murderous tour of the Basilica di San Tommaso. The setting is based on a real church, the Basilica di San Clemente, an ancient site where archaeologists have discovered at least three levels of buildings, the oldest being deep under the present ground level.

On top sits the 12th century basilica. However, below that archaeologists have unearthed a 4th-century basilica,



beneath? *to Scotland*



by Vivien
Martin

originally part of the sumptuous home of a Roman nobleman. Below that again, is a lower basement which served as a *mithraeum* (a temple for the worship of Mithras) until that religion was outlawed. It's even possible that the home of that wealthy Roman nobleman had been built on the foundations of a much older republican-era building, which was destroyed in the Great Fire of AD 64. These discoveries have shed a great deal of light on the turbulent history of Rome and the varied lifestyles of its inhabitants.

But what has this to do with our mysterious ancestors, those elusive Picts? Those tribes who spoke a Celtic language and lived from the 3rd to the 9th centuries in eastern Scotland? Just as there's been a lot of digging in Rome, discovering what lies beneath, there has been a surge in archaeological projects in Scotland in recent years. These excavations have unearthed finds that have added greatly to our knowledge and understanding of the Picts.

Knowledge of the past is seldom fixed and final. It's not static, and archaeology and historical research are our tools for learning more.

One of these major projects took place between 1994 and 2007 in Portmahomack, a small fishing village in Easter Ross. Nine miles east of Tain, Portmahomack is on the Tarbat Ness peninsula, overlooking the Dornoch Firth. The name comes from the Gaelic *Port Mo Chalmaig*, Port (or Haven) of St Colmóc, or St Colmán, an early Irish saint, possibly (but not definitively) St Colmán of Lindisfarne.

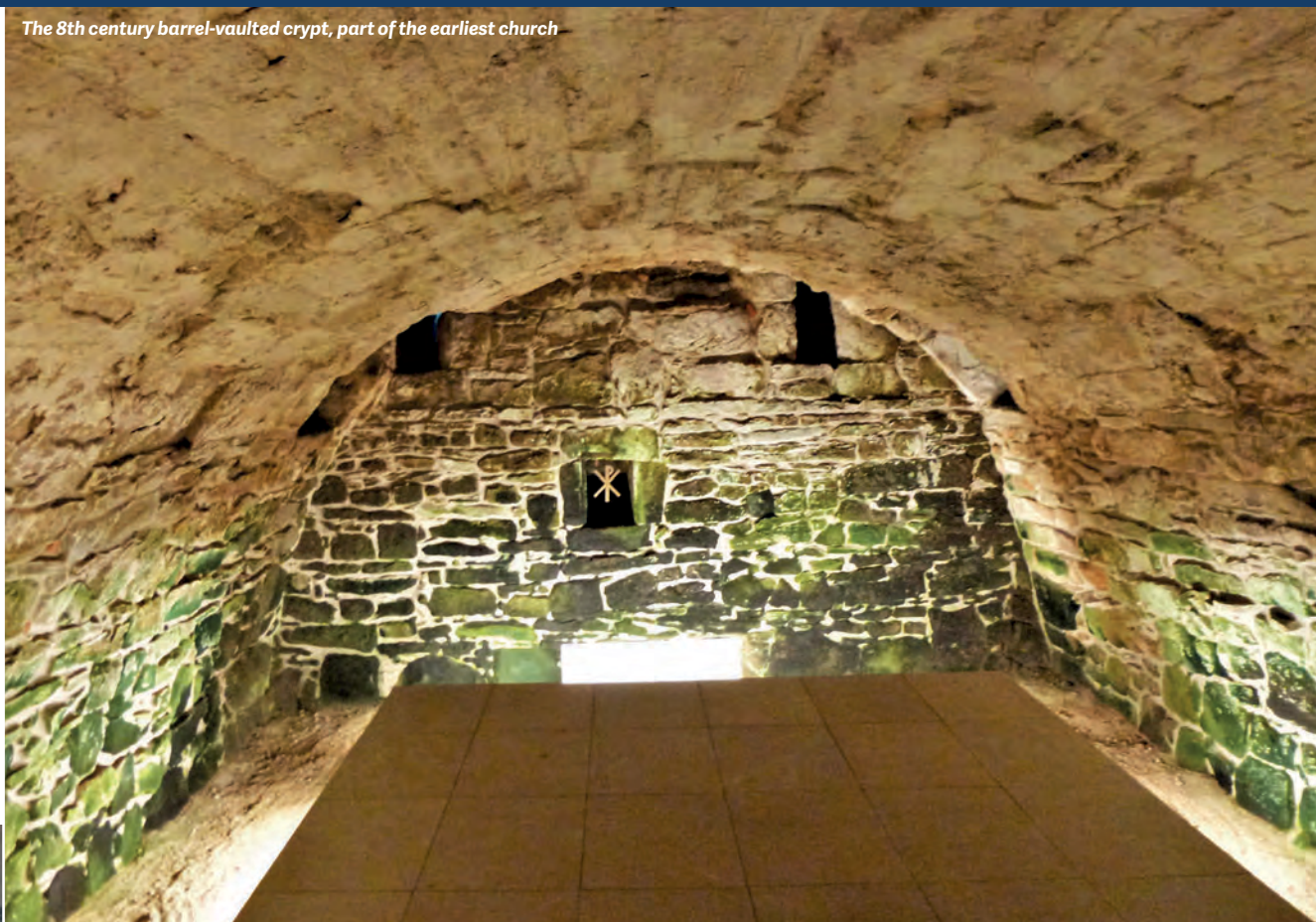
Buildings made of turf or wood leave few traces. But stone is different; castles and monasteries are proof of that. And it's often the case that sacred sites, places of worship, gain a reputation for sanctity, so that even when the buildings of one age are destroyed, others are later built upon them. Portmahomack is no exception. In the 12th century a small medieval parish church was built here, dedicated to St Colmán. The building was expanded in the 13th century and a crypt created, taking in remains of a much earlier building, which could have been part of the Pictish church that stood there previously. The church was altered again during the Reformation, then largely rebuilt in 1756. So quite apart from its Pictish connection, this is a site of great antiquity and historical interest in its own right.

In medieval times it was not uncommon for people to be buried within the nave of a church, though only the rich and powerful would have a stone memorial. By the 18th century, however, most people were buried in graveyards with headstones. Thanks to this increase in grave digging, a number of fragments of ancient carved stones were unearthed around the church. It was becoming clear there was something down there!

Apart from its Pictish connection, this is a site of great antiquity and historical interest in its own right

Tarbat Discovery Centre, Portmahomack (formerly St Colman's Church)

The 8th century barrel-vaulted crypt, part of the earliest church



Cist burial from the 6th century

Around AD 800, the monastery and the surrounding community were destroyed by Viking invaders

In the 19th century attempts to understand the past grew. The Rev J. M. Joass, (1838-1914), forty years a minister and a noted antiquarian, came across a carved stone in the manse wall. With its Latin inscription he realised it was another clue. Latin was the language of the law and the church. So could there once have been an early monastery here? More recently aerial photography has proved invaluable to archaeologists, revealing features in the landscape invisible on the ground. And here in Portmahomack such images clearly showed there had once been an enclosure ditch around the church: a twin of that on Iona.

In the 1990s a major excavation was organised under the direction of Prof Martin Carver and the University of York and they hit gold! Imagine the excitement when the archaeologists uncovered the site of one the most extensive Pictish Christian monasteries in Scotland. Founded around AD 560, perhaps even by Columba himself, the archaeological evidence showed that this monastery in Pictland grew and flourished for the next 300 years.

They discovered that the monastery had a farm, a mill and a cemetery, as well as workshops for the making of sacred church objects, intricate sculptures, and illustrated books (similar to the *Book of Kells*). They worked in bronze, silver, gold and glass: as well as creating magnificent carved sculptures and cross-slabs; combining those enigmatic symbols we associate so closely with the Picts today, with Christian symbolism.

Discoveries like these at Portmahomack have given us new insights into Pictish civilisation. They were definitely not simply the barbaric 'painted' warriors of Roman propaganda, but an artistic, highly cultured people, skilled craftsmen, well-organized, well-travelled and not isolated from contemporary politics and events: Portmahomack was a key point on the North Sea trade routes.

But then tragedy struck when, around AD 800, the monastery and the surrounding community were destroyed

"A gem of a museum"

Tarbat Discovery Centre

Pictish and local heritage
museum at Portmahomack



An independent local museum of
national importance where
Scotland's Pictish past comes to life

*It became clear
that something
very ancient and
very substantial lay
beneath their feet*

by Viking invaders. The wonderful treasure that was this unique Pictish monastery was reduced to rubble and gradually disappeared beneath the earth, to be eventually forgotten. Until, centuries later, we reach our gravediggers who unearthed fragments of ancient carved stones and it became clear that something very ancient and very substantial lay beneath their feet. And the re-discovery began.

Yet, if these people were so civilised, why is it we know so little about them? After all their language and culture must have existed for over five hundred years. As Dr Nicholas Evans of Aberdeen University points out, 'they are the last major ethnic identity in the British Isles to become extinct. Nevertheless in their own time they played a major role in the history of northern Europe, and had a profound impact on the successor society

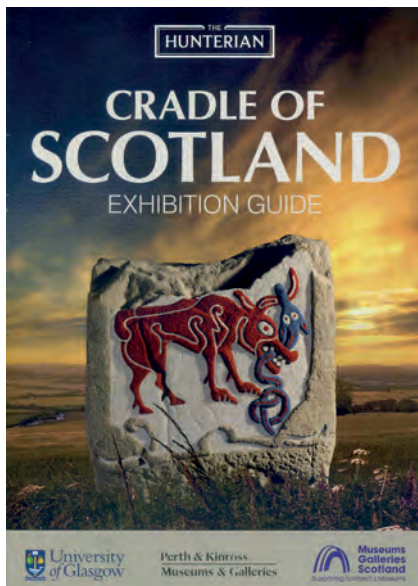
The Pictish Stones of Easter Ross



Tain & District Museum Trust



Portmahomack sits on the Dornoch Firth



of Alba, which formed the basis for Scotland.'

Perhaps the main reason we know so little about them, is not because they lived quiet, uncomplicated or uneventful lives, but because they left no written records. They flourished within the period which used to be called the Dark Ages – roughly from the fall of the Western Roman Empire to the end of the first millennium. Though, as it becomes clearer that this period wasn't as dark as many imagine, historians today prefer to use the term Early Historic.

While they left no written records themselves, others did and some of what we do know about the Picts comes from the surviving texts of neighbouring peoples: Irish annals, king-lists, Anglo-Saxon documents.

They flourished within the period which used to be called the Dark Ages

Drawing of Constantine's Cross (formerly the Dupplin Cross) by Ian G Scott





The Forteviot Dagger

Even the name, Picts, comes from Roman chroniclers, who described them in Latin as *picti*, the 'painted people'. What they called themselves, no-one knows.

But they did leave a legacy of place names and carved stones, a linguistic and sculptural heritage that gives tantalising clues to their geographical and cultural spread. From these we know they lived predominantly on the east coast of Scotland and north of the Forth-Clyde line. For example, think of all those place names beginning with 'pit'. In his history of the Scots language, *The Mither Tongue*, Billy Kay points out, "In eastern Scotland, north of the Firth, there are over 300 place names with the prefix pit, from *pett* a share or portion of land: Pitlochry in Perthshire is the stony share, Pitcaple in Aberdeenshire is the horse share, and Pittencrieff in Fife is the share of the tree. They are almost certainly of Pictish origin and although most of the second elements of these names are Gaelic, they provide one of the few indications of the extent of Pictish lands in Scotland."

Historians divide the Picts into two main groupings, the Northern and the Southern, with Burghead in Moray and Forteviot in Strathearn at the centre of these areas respectively. Both are areas which have been, and still are, subject to intensive archaeological investigation. The trouble with many archaeological finds, though, is that they can be fragmentary, badly damaged, and their original purpose unclear.

Years of being buried deep underground don't help. And ancient ruins tend to appear stark and grey, so it's not surprising we sometimes think of the past as dark and



The Forteviot Handbell



The Abernethy Pictish Symbol Stone



The Burghead Bull

They provide one of the few indications of the extent of Pictish lands in Scotland



bleak. That the Dark Ages, really were dark. Yet if you've seen old black and white photographs and films after they've been colourised, the effect can be startling. Facial reconstructions too, show clearly just how physically like us they were. And that brings our ancestors much closer. They become 'real' people.

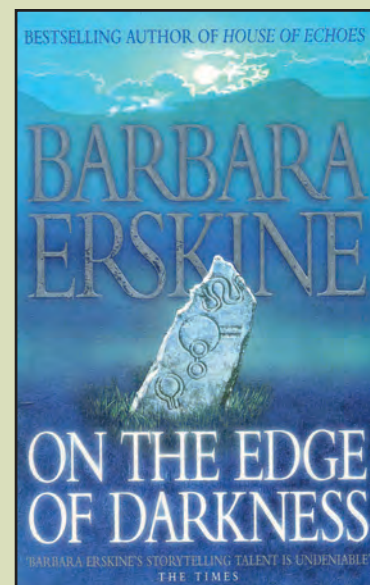
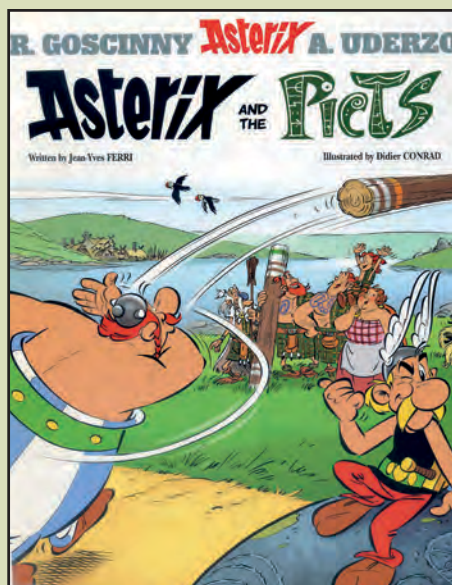
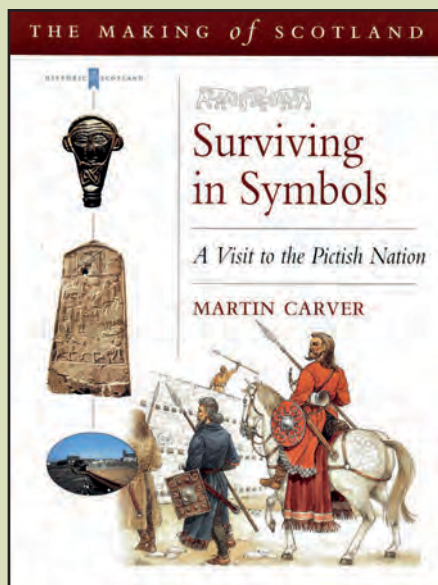
Perhaps that's why it was such a pleasure to see the digital re-colouring of the Forteviot Arch at the wonderful *Cradle of Scotland* exhibition, which was held at the Hunterian Museum in Glasgow in 2015 and at the Perth Museum in 2016. The exhibition presented the results of ten years work by the University of Glasgow's Strathearn Environs and Royal Forteviot Project, SERF. It featured not only the Forteviot Arch fragment, which was found in the Water of May in the 19th century, dating, it is thought,

The Picts didn't suddenly pop out of nowhere, but were probably descended from native tribes inhabiting north-east Scotland since prehistoric times

from the early 9th century, but also the Dupplin Cross, now known as Constantine's Cross. And it charted the area's rich history from prehistoric times. While the exhibition is long over, it's still possible to look at it online via the SERF link, hosted by the University of Glasgow website.

What makes Forteviot so important? Why was this area chosen to be a royal Pictish centre? Forteviot wasn't a landscape that could be easily defended. Quite the opposite in fact, as it was open and fertile. But things seldom happen in isolation. The Picts didn't suddenly pop out of nowhere, but were probably descended from native tribes inhabiting north-east Scotland since prehistoric times. Communities with their own religious beliefs and ceremonies, who later converted to Christianity. Forteviot was an important link in this continuum, as it had been the focus of over 3,000 years of ritual burial and monument building.

Archaeologist Dr Tim Clarkson suggests the choice of Forteviot was well thought out, with the palace "deliberately located next to an impressive 'ritual landscape' of prehistoric henges and barrows, whose connections with powerful ancestors could not be questioned. The new centre of Pictish royalty thus received a stamp of legitimacy



and a suitable whiff of antiquity from its proximity to monuments of the remote past.”

Through the archaeology of this ancient landscape, the SERF project charts the evolution of Scotland from the earliest farming settlements of Neolithic times to becoming the royal residence of Pictish kings, until the 9th century when, with the arrival of Kenneth Mac Alpin, it became the seat of the kings of Alba (Gaelic for Scotland).

And it's quite a journey! From Neolithic Forteviot of 3000 BC with its burials, cremations and huge palisaded enclosure; through the Bronze Age and the forging of the striking Forteviot Dagger; to Iron Age hill-forts and occasional visits from the Romans, which in turn saw the tribes of the north-east becoming the Picts thanks to the Romans describing the people of this area as 'Picti' – the 'painted people'.

But what really intrigued me is the particularly interesting change in the course of the 9th century, when the kingdom that called itself Pictland eventually came to call itself the Kingdom of Alba. What brought Cináed mac Alpín (Kenneth son of Alpin) eastwards from his western stronghold and how did the medieval Kingdom of Scotland really come about?

Not so long ago I read an interesting account of this period which suggested that there wasn't a swift and brutal takeover of Pictland by Kenneth and his Gaels, as previously thought, rather that there had long been much coming and going between the Gaels and the Picts. But then growing pressure from Viking attacks from the 800s onwards created a Scotland full of turmoil and uncertainty, and it was this turmoil that may have prompted many Gaels to move eastwards.

Forteviot, long a spiritual, political and cultural centre of the southern Picts, as well as a fertile and wealthy part of the country, would have been an obvious place to head for. The arrival of this new political elite may have slowly altered the balance of power, with the language and culture of the Gaels eventually superseding that of their cousins, the Picts. In all events, Kenneth mac Alpin became the first king of this new Scottish dynasty with Forteviot at its centre.

It's described in the SERF project literature like this, "Forteviot occupies a special place in the history of Scotland. The death of King Kenneth mac Alpin, one of the first kings of a united Scotland, was recorded at the 'palace'

of Forteviot in AD 858 and at this time this site was a major royal centre in a fledgling Scottish nation.”

The Cradle of Scotland was a fascinating exhibition and showed just how much archaeology continues to tell us about the past. With 3D illustrations and magnificent contemporary exhibits, it was definitely *not* a dull black and white past that unfolded, but one full of colour and vibrancy, depicting lives lived amidst both the mundane and the sacred. Adding colour to the Forteviot Arch showed the figures in a new depth and detail, almost cartoon-like in their appearance, but it certainly makes you see our ancestors in a whole new light!

One way or another we are all shaped by the past. A better understanding of that makes for a better understanding of ourselves. And who knows what else is waiting to be discovered?

Useful sources:

Picts in the Port, Tarbat Discovery Centre: <http://tarbat-discovery.co.uk/>

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It was definitely not a dull black and white past that unfolded, but one full of colour and vibrancy, depicting lives lived amidst both the mundane and the sacred

A question of



Judith Leyster, Self-Portrait, c. 1630

balance

By Peter
A Bell



“Representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men; they describe it from their own point of view, which they confuse with absolute truth.”

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*

WHEN SHE spoke of the world and its representation as being the work of men, Simone de Beauvoir intended this quite literally. She was not using the term ‘men’ in any generic sense; as a synonym for humankind, as was common practice until feminist writers such as de Beauvoir prompted more thoughtful use of language. The claim is that world we know has been created by men. And that we know that world as it is represented by men in art and culture and politics and science and all else.

It is not my purpose here to pursue a debate about how true this was when Simone de Beauvoir’s feminist treatise was published in 1949; or the extent to which things have changed over those seven decades. That, historically, the world was created by men seems no more open to question than that endeavours to explain and portray the world were, until relatively recently, the all but exclusive province of men. When we talk about the ‘Old Masters’, we tend to think solely of the great male painters of the past. In history, the phrase ‘old mistresses’ might suggest something rather less elevated.

Which is not to say there were no women among the misnamed ‘Old Masters’. Consider, for example, the 16th century sculptor, Properzia di Rossi. Or 17th century painters such as Judith Leyster, Clara Peeters or Fede Galizia, whose still life works are so vividly realistic one can almost smell the fruit and the flowers.

Francoise Duparc is, in the present context, of particular interest. She was an 18th century artist who painted portraits of working class people, and was shunned by the French art world for that reason. Here was a woman creating representations of the world. But, because she was a woman, her work was not permitted to have any significant influence on the way in which the world was perceived. To whatever extent things may have changed in the last century or so, historically, the male perspective dominated. That legacy persists.

The material world is also largely the “work of men”. With all the usual caveats about sweeping generalisations, the material world has been designed and built by men for the purposes of men. We may like to think this is no longer the case. But a recent book by Caroline Criado

This makes vehicles so unsuited to the female form that women are “nearly 50% more likely to be seriously hurt” if involved in a car crash



Simone de Beauvoir

Perez suggests otherwise. In *Invisible Women* she describes some of the ways in which the world continues to be designed and built by and for men. She tells us how cars are designed around a ‘Reference Man’, and how this makes vehicles so unsuited to the female form that women are “nearly 50% more likely to be seriously hurt” if involved in a car crash.

More mundanely, Caroline Criado Perez points out that the smartphone is also designed with dimensions suited to the average man. This tends to mean that they are somewhat unwieldy in the smaller hands of a typical woman. Is this a trivial matter? Does it remain trivial when considered as only one of myriad examples?

The quote with which we opened may be seen as expressing a grievance against men. Indeed, in the context of Simone de Beauvoir’s book, that’s exactly what it is. But even as she condemns male oppression of women, de Beauvoir recognises that it is perfectly natural for humans to understand themselves in opposition to others. She maintains that gender is a special case, however, and that male categorisation of women amounts to a denial of their humanity.



Clara Peeters, circa 1610 The subject is most likely Clara Peeters herself

Old woman Sitting by Françoise Duparc, Musée des beaux-arts de Marseille



While acknowledging the reality of a gender imbalance which tends to assign women an inferior status, I do not embrace the perspective which presents this as the consequence of a purposefully adversarial approach by men. There is no great male conspiracy to keep women down. Men are as much the subject of imposed gender roles as women. Gender imbalance is systemic. Its origins lie in human biology. It is explained by evolutionary psychology. It just happened. It was nobody's fault.

The problem is that 'primitive' gender roles persisted long after they became redundant. Long after any evolutionary purpose became irrelevant, these gender roles continued in the context of complex human civilisations profoundly different from the small, nomadic kin-groups in which they had adaptive value. This 'alien' environment threw up aberrant mutations in the realm of gender relations just as it did in other essential areas of human life, such as work, property and consumption.

While the 'inferior' status of women had a tendency to serve men in general, the advantage was purely incidental. Society is structured to serve those who have the power to structure society. If injustice, inequity and insecurity serve established power then, necessarily and inevitably, the creation and perpetuation of social imbalance will be an overarching imperative for established power. This is true regardless of the sex of those who enjoy the privilege of power.

If men are to be castigated it is not for being part of any campaign to oppress women, but for failing to realise



*Judith with the Head of Holofernes (1596).
The figure of Judith is believed to be a self-portrait*

earlier the extent to which society as a whole is diminished and debilitated by gender imbalance. If men are to be condemned it is not for deviously and maliciously contriving their own advantage, but for allowing themselves to be bought off by this largely illusory advantage rather than seeking to rectify the damaging social imbalance from which it was derived.

None of this occurred to me when I first read the quote. Initially unaware of its provenance, I took a rather different meaning from it. A meaning which, for all it was not what the author intended, is nonetheless entirely valid. I made the mistake which I mentioned earlier in that I read the word 'men' as implying 'people'. I read the quote as,

*If men are to be
condemned it is
not for deviously
and maliciously
contriving their
own advantage*

"Representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of people; they describe it from their own point of view, which they confuse with absolute truth."

Each of us has a worldview. We see the world in a particular way. We have more or less fixed ideas about the way things are, and the way they should be. Partly an aspect of our genetic inheritance; partly absorbed from the social environment in which we are immersed during our



formative years; partly formed by our experiences as an adult, our worldview informs all our attitudes and values. It is the game board on which we play out our interactions with society and our relationships with other people. It is how we describe the world to ourselves. It is our truth about the world.

The concept of worldview is particularly relevant to our politics. Our political philosophy derives, not from any political manifesto, but from

It is the game board on which we play out our interactions with society and our relationships with other people

the way in which we perceive the world. Whether we are of the political left or right isn't so much down to education and/or indoctrination as to what accords most closely with our worldview. What we are most comfortable with. And what we are comfortable with is a function of our attitudes and values. Things like empathy, sense of justice, respect for authority, loyalty and notions of what is socially acceptable.

It's not that people on one wing or the other are particularly deficient in any aspect of their humanity - however much the political rhetoric may insist otherwise. Rather, it is a matter of how our worldview bids us apportion relative weight to our attitudes and values. Whether we tend to the political left or right depends on how much importance we attach to empathy and fairness. If our worldview disposes us to attach greater importance than average, we will be predisposed to tend to the left.

Those whose worldview disposes them to give relatively greater weight to authority, loyalty and purity (www.yourmorals.org) will find themselves more comfortable on the political right.

Barring some pathology, all human beings possess empathy and a sense of justice. We all have the ability to acknowledge authority and a capacity for loyalty and ideas of what is appropriate behaviour. We are all made to the same recipe. Only the quantities of various ingredients differ. And, for the most part, they differ only slightly. It's all a matter of balance.

In political campaigning, it is pointless trying to change a person's worldview. As a whole, its mass and inertia makes it all but immovable. What an effective political campaign can hope to do is slightly alter the balance of one or two ingredients. By adding just a little empathy or nudging the sense of justice, it may be possible to alter the individual's political comfort zone. By adjusting respect for authority or tinkering with loyalties or appealing to particular ideas of propriety, a person's politics may be meaningfully shifted without disturbing their worldview.

From such small adjustments can arise massive societal change. If we are to address the social imbalances which blight society, we must first address the balance of priorities in the minds of those who, by their action or inaction, allow those social imbalances to persist.

Whichever way you read that quote from Simone de Beauvoir, it prompts some interesting thoughts.



Louis Ducis- Properzia de Rossi finishing her last bas-relief (1822, Musée de l'Evêché de Limoges)



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by Dr Steve
McCabe

PFI?

THIS MONTH I want to tell you a story. It's a fiscal horror story that would have Stephen King breaking into a cold sweat. It's about two men and their favoured man-servant called Milburn who went to London to seek their fortunes and took a fairly minor Tory indiscretion, pumped it up with political steroids and dropped it on the UK taxpayer like some slow-burning financial mustard gas, the side effects of which continue to be felt today.

Are you sitting uncomfortably?
Let's begin.

When giving his Autumn Statement in December 1992 the then Tory Chancellor, Norman Lamont, introduced a new concept for financing public building projects which he called the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). He did this with the express intention of "increasing the scope for private financing of capital projects".

As had become the tradition with new Tory finance policies PFI was first introduced in Scotland with the building of the Skye Bridge. This was completed in October 1995 at a cost of £25 million or thereabouts and set about fleecing locals and tourists alike with exorbitant tolls.

After that the Tories only had one other PFI project, a small dementia unit in Edinburgh, before falling from power in dramatic fashion in May 2007.

When Tony and Gordon rode into Downing Street on the back of that landslide election result in 1997 they were certainly 'New' and even though it was for many quite hard to see what was actually 'Labour' about them, they had to be better than another 5 years of Conservative rule hadn't they?

One of the first things they did was to inflate PFI hugely. Blair appointed Alan Milburn as Health Secretary in 1999 who famously said at the time that when it came to building new hospitals it was "PFI or bust".

the National Audit Office were highlighting that NHS hospitals were having to cut staff and services in order to meet the financial obligations PFI held on them

By 2001 the New Labour Government had signed 210 PFI contracts with a combined value of £11.6 billion. A further 206 deals worth £12.7 billion followed between 2001 and 2005 and another 227 projects between 2005 and 2012, despite Tory Shadow Chancellor George Osborne saying in 2009 that PFI, his own party's original policy, was discredited.

In 2010 Allyson Pollock, who is now Professor of Public Health at Newcastle University, described PFI in a British Medical Journal article as "the gift that keeps on taking". In that same year the National Audit Office were highlighting that NHS hospitals were having to cut staff and services in order to meet the financial obligations PFI held on them. In 2012 George Osborne introduced PF2 despite complaints from the Public Accounts Committee that Government was hiding the true costs of private finance contracts.

In Scotland, PF2 translated into Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) which were to be "non-profit distributing" (NPD) deals. Such deals would be delivered through a Scottish Government owned infrastructure company called the Scottish Futures Trust.

In 2018 the UK National Audit Office produced a report which suggested the taxpayer would be footing a bill for PFI totalling £220 billion pounds by 2040. At the same time it was estimated that the average project done through PFI was at least 70% more expensive than if it had been done through direct public financing.

As if to demonstrate how messed up it had all become 'think tank' organisation The Smith Institute produced a report in January 2018 setting out what it regarded as "progressive" reforms of PPP including open accounts and a limit of profits that could be made from PFI.

Writing for the London School of Economics in 2018 Vivek Kotecha, a Research Officer with 'think tank' The Centre for Health and Public Interest, highlighted the issues behind PFI and the legacy it had left. To buy out existing PFI contracts would be prohibitively expensive and easily challenged in the law courts. In the NHS across the UK PFI contract holders will make £1 billion pounds of profit out of PFI over the next 5 years. This amounts to a quarter of the new money the Government proposes to give the NHS over this timeframe. Kotecha describes this as a "leakage of taxpayers' money straight into PFI profits" for companies like Balfour Beattie who foresee such profits as likely to grow in the coming years. He also talks about the annual servicing of £10 billion of PFI-related debt which will lock taxpayers into "a hire purchase arrangement that will continue to place an unnecessary burden on public expenditure for decades to come".

And he claims that it is almost impossible to

WTF?



get out of many of these PFI deals and that they were deliberately designed by New Labour to be that way. They also effectively absolved investors of any real risk whilst at the same time keeping the costs of new schools and hospitals off the immediate Government balance sheet in the ultimate high stakes game of financial smoke and mirrors. Government also guaranteed to continue meeting the payments even if the local authorities or local NHS no longer could. Private investors had nothing to lose and everything to gain.

The PFI contract holders put up the money to build the buildings but then recouped that investment through annual repayments of building costs (plus interest) as well as 25 or 30 year care and maintenance contracts at the end of which the PFI company may still own the building.

The aim of the Scottish Government introducing NPD PPP in 2007 was not to abolish the concept of PFI altogether (which, in my view, is what they should have done). Rather it was an attempt merely to limit the profits that could be made from PFI-type projects.

To date there are 129 PFI/PPP projects in Scotland, including many schools and at least 45 new hospitals and healthcare facilities, with a combined capital value in excess of £7 billion.

Writing in a report for the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe), in October 2018, Senior Researcher Nicola Hudson states "repayment costs [in Scotland] will total £39.7 billion, more than four times the capital value of the projects".

Traditional PFI contracts carry repayments of five times the capital value. But even with the Scottish Governments newer NPD PPP model the eventual cost is still at least three times as much. Between now and 2048 the Scottish Government and, therefore, the Scottish tax payer will have to fork out another £29 billion supporting these projects. These payments will amount to something in the region of 4 to 5% of the total Scottish Government budget.



Norman Lamont



Alan Milburn



George Osborne



Allyson Pollock

Under New Labour the Treasury and Department of Health "locked" the taxpayer into long-term debt

To put all this in perspective if you were to take out a six figure mortgage today and pay it off over 25 years at a high interest rate of 7% you would still not pay anymore than twice the original capital cost.

Writing in the Guardian in 2012, Professor Pollock explained how under New Labour the Treasury and Department of Health "locked" the taxpayer into long-term debt. She was in no doubt where the blame lay. By paying many times over for buildings money is being directly diverted away from staff, services and patient care. Professor Pollock laid out what she believed the public needed to know but was not being told:

1. "the high costs of PFI debt charges means that the NHS can only operate anything from a third to a half as many services and staff as it would have done had the schemes been funded through traditional procurement"
2. "we can still afford to pay for universal healthcare if we stop using NHS funds to prop up banks and equity investors"
3. "it is PFI deficits that are driving service closures, not patient demand or an ageing population"

Edinburgh's new Royal Infirmary was completed in 2003 under PFI at a cost of £180 million. By 2034 NHS Lothian will have paid back a total of £1.6 billion, almost ten times the original capital cost. And yet despite that it will not even own the building at the end of the contract.

The toxic legacy of Blair and Brown's foray into venture capitalism is still damaging service provision and penalising taxpayers more than 20 years later with no end in sight. And what is Labour's response now when asked to apologise for their PFI legacy? "We won't apologise for building new schools and hospitals".

Not good enough and it is time the Scottish Government grasped the nettle and put an end to this form of blatant profiteering once and for all.

The Orkney News

Bringing you the alternative news in Orkney



Animating History

Fiona Grahame

I have always been fascinated by the 'ordinary' people behind events who in their own determined way affect societal change. Not the grand leaders of whom biographies are written but the folk who slog on with the committee meetings, the fundraising and the campaigning. The Orcadian suffragists interested me and with an award, from the Scottish Government's Centenary Fund, Martin Laird and I decided to produce an educational pack for local schools which would tell their story. Central to engaging the interest of our intended audience is a short animation. Here is Martin to tell you about that.

With an award, from the Scottish Government's Centenary Fund, Martin Laird and I decided to produce an educational pack for local schools

by
Fiona Grahame



Martin Laird

When Fiona initially suggested producing an animation I was apprehensive as I did not want us to commit to anything over-ambitious. The prospect of making something with hand-painted artwork was appealing, but creating every frame that way was not a realistic prospect given the timescale we had to work with. I thought it would be possible to make simple, stylised hand-drawn "puppets", cut-out and animated on a computer.

The Orkney News

Bringing you the alternative news in Orkney



Phyllis Hourston &
Stanley Cursiter by
Martin Laird



Phyllis Hourston by
Stanley Cursiter

I have some familiarity with 3d modelling software from my university days, and chose to use a free, open-source 3d program called Blender to create the animation. Blender is very powerful and versatile - complicated but modular and logical. It has a plugin designed for 2d cut-out animation, so I could ignore those parts of the program which were not needed (although I did find a use for its physics simulation and particle emitter functions!)

Once Fiona had researched and written the script, a storyboard was produced. This went through several

iterations. The design of characters and locations were derived from period photos, and stylised to make some reference to the world of 20th century art (the artist Stanley Cursiter was associated with the Orcadian Woman's Suffrage Society, having designed its banner and married Phyllis Hourston, one of its members).

The artwork was painted in gouache, which dries with a matte finish and therefore photographs easily. The visual aesthetic is flat, simple, and colourful, so that the art could be created quickly. Cutting up these paintings digitally and combining them in different ways proved to be an interesting way of working. It was quite improvisational and created colour combinations and compositions which I would not have arrived at by other means.

Fiona and I were lucky that our first choices for narration and music both agreed to take part in this project. Kim Foden has a professional-sounding radio voice, with a distinct but clear Orcadian accent. Her narration is upbeat and enthusiastic, which helps to keep the viewer engaged.

James Watson is one of a number of Orcadian musicians who were supportive of Yes Orkney during the 2014 independence referendum campaign. I had seen him perform live several times at Yes events, and thought he was the perfect choice for this project. His music is folk-tinged but modern and atmospheric. He delivered exactly what we were looking for as bed music for the narration. The tempo of the music influenced the flow of the animation.

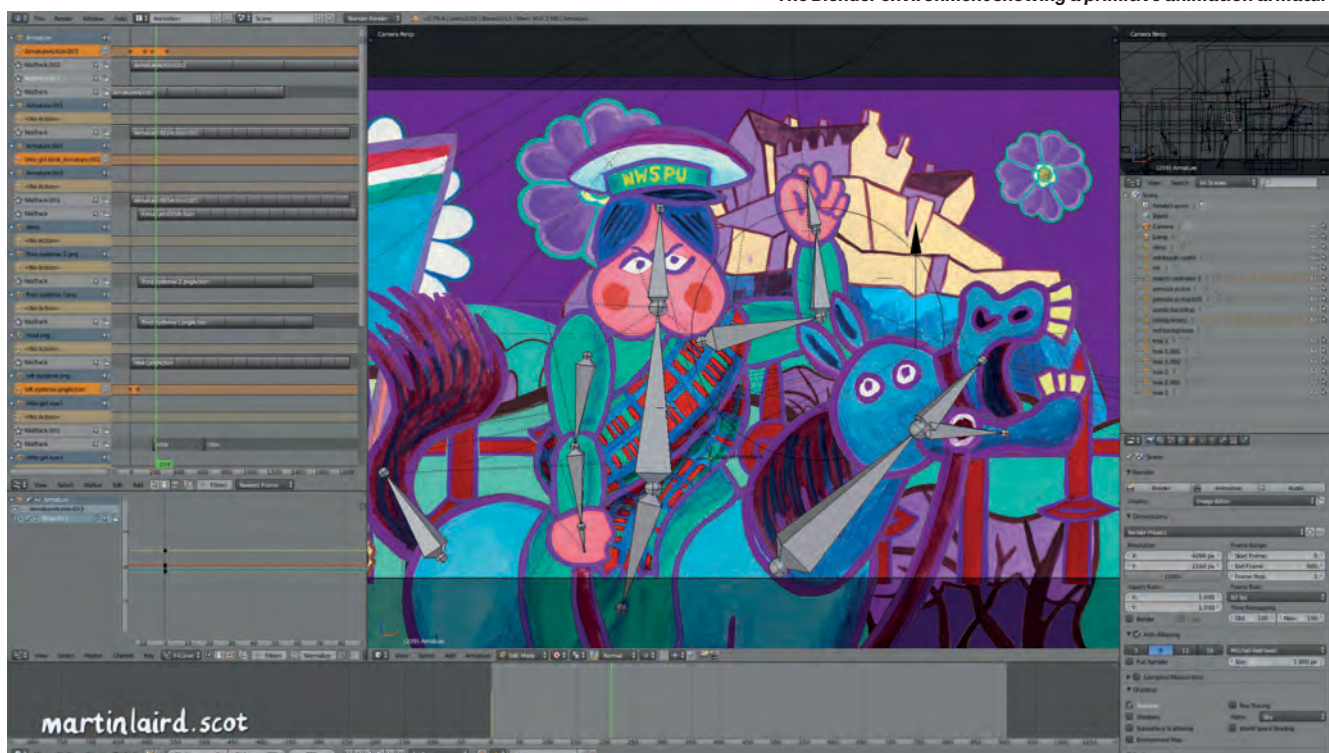
The story of the Orcadian Woman's Suffrage Society is a good historical example of people working together for positive social reform. As Suffragists they were peaceful, not radical in comparison to the Suffragettes who made the headlines (the Daily Mail coined that name), but they were willing to stand up and do something about injustice. Unlike so many they did not just accept their lot. Their story

*The story of the
Orcadian Woman's
Suffrage Society is
a good historical
example of people
working together
for positive social
reform*



Character development

The Blender environment showing a primitive animation armature



has some parallels with the political activism that I have experienced, which has been educational and has brought people together in a positive way. Fiona and I liked the title "A Gude Cause Maks A Strong Erm" not only because this was a banner slogan used by the women, but also because it can be applied to other causes.

This is an appealing story because it is largely forgotten, and untold. It shows a side of Orkney which I do not think people will have seen.

When we began this project I did not know that the

It shows a side of Orkney which I do not think people will have seen

Orkadian Woman's Suffrage Society included men. I would not have thought it proper to tackle this subject on my own, but feel comfortable because it has been written and narrated by women. The involvement of men like Stanley Cursiter in the past make it seem fitting that myself and James are helping Fiona and Kim tell this story now.

Frankly, my dear

by Indy
Lawyer

KIDOLOGY is a fascinating art; Margaret Mitchell wrote a novel which was likely racist, bigoted, hopeless and bleak, but moguls with money and heft transformed it into the original Technicolor blockbuster. They did so well that 83 years after its premiere I, a white, egalitarian, educated professional woman can still melt at certain phrases and recite many acts word perfectly. And I think about Mammy's taffeta underskirt, Bonnie's pony, and the flight from Atlanta as if they had any relevance to my life or the futures of those whom I hold dear.

That brainwashing gets my goat, because the reason why I'm pondering Scarlett O'Hara and Rhett's dashing devilment is that apart from the famous Scarlett the only other woman whose escapades have affected my life and who has also had the cunning stunner to pretend that adverse events had not occurred, did not exist and would be wiped from the mind banks is our current PM, Mrs Teresa May. Like Scarlett, she switches

She didn't vote in the EU referendum as it was a really hard question

off the outside world, grabs a wee handful of dirt and recites that she'll think of it tomorrow, at Tara, as, after all, tomorrow is another day.

And somehow Mrs May, like Scarlett with her emerald eyes and 18 inch waist, has the magical ability to hypnotise those around her with the effect that they too believe, or deny, ignore, recognise, obfuscate, obliterate, refuse, challenge and simultaneously see, evaluate, process, discount and elevate all possible outcomes. No bloody wonder we're all scunnered to buggery.

There's a daft wee blonde dumpling who was elected a Tory MP; this may sound a bit like the Princess and The Pea, I feel my pain now. She didn't vote in the EU referendum as it was a really hard question. However, she has been able to answer all the really hard questions following on from her election. Her Dad has helped her as he happens to have a fruit farm. And Barbie does wee press releases which I suspect Ken writes for her, where she pretends to rant, rage and rave about that SNP and that Nicola Sturgeon who haven't got 4G in every airt and pairt. As Barb forgets (as it's another too hard thing to know) that Broadband isnae devolved so the person who's letting her, you and me down is her gaffer. So I suspect that Barb likely does a Scarlett and paps to one side the really hard bits she can't get her wee dyed blonde heid round, she'll go home at weekends and cuddle in with a hot water bottle and a new Enid Blyton tale of the Famous Five or the Secret Seven.

There are other British girls, neither blonde, nor privately educated, and not in dubious positions of power who hit the headlines recently. Some of those dress in black, wear clothes I can neither name nor adequately describe, comprising items I don't know or understand, but I do respect. Some little children, British, born just days ago, will not grow up to read or research my views, or those of their mothers; they'll be turned to dust before the milk in my fridge has gone sour. Their Mums might have been groomed, as children, but grew to learn that there is a British on/off switch which requires that at a certain age, even when still too young to vote, drink, buy alcohol, even drive, these wanton women will be deemed to have come of age sufficiently to deserve to starve, hunger and hang. Just as one man's freedom fighter was another man's terrorist, so is one woman's grooming victim also such a guerrilla. Britain is grating again; the quicker we vamoose the better. Not in my name, once more. Rest in peace, wee man, your family may have let you down, I am so sorry and sad that your country denied you life. x



Shamima Begum and baby



A History of the Scots Language by Billy Kay

Billy Kay is the author of Scots The Mither Tongue and over the next few months, he will tell the story of the Scots language from its ancient origins to the present day.

Part 4: The Confusion of Union

It is true that the nations are *unius labii*, and have not the first curse of disunion, which was confusion of tongues, whereby one understood not the other. But yet, the dialect is differing, and it remaineth a mark of distinction. But for that, *tempori permittendum*, it is to be left to time. For considering that both languages do concur in the principal office and duty of a language, which is to make a man's self understood, for the rest it is rather to be accounted (as was said) a diversity of dialect than of language: and as I said in my first writing it is like to bring forth the enriching of one language, by compounding and taking in the proper and significant words of either tongue, rather than a continuance of two languages.

Francis Bacon's eloquent appraisal of the relationship between the languages of the two Kingdoms, written the year after James's accession to the English throne is very much a vision of an ideal Union. There, not one people or their language is to predominate over the other, instead, their joint culture will be a creative fusion of the best both has to offer. It didnae happen! Instead, we begin to witness the attempt first by the upper classes in Scotland and much later by the middle classes to divest themselves of all trace of their native tongue. It was to take them a very long time and was certainly unsuccessful as far as speech was concerned until wealthy Scots began sending their sons to be educated at English public schools towards the end of the 18th century. In the early 17th century however the elite of the Scottish aristocracy were just

beginning to recognise London as the centre of their orbit. It probably came as a great shock to them that language they considered refined was regarded as comic by their peers at court and in high society. In a way, the English reaction was quite natural. Over two centuries later Lord Cockburn recalled how an English accent was so unusual at the Royal High School that the arrival of an English pupil sent everyone into paroxysms of laughter, whenever the unfortunate boy opened his mouth. The English lad was probably cut to the quick by their cruelty, and the Scots aristocrats in London probably felt much the same. However London was where the action was, and if to get a piece of it you had to swallow your pride and adapt to the manners of the Southern Metropolis, well...that would be home from now on. To mak the future siccar, monie a Scot on the make invested in an English wife...gin faither wes a bittie coorse, weel at least the bairns wad hae the bon ton!

Francis Bacon



The arrival of an English pupil sent everyone into paroxysms of laughter, whenever the unfortunate boy opened his mouth

SCOTS
THE MITHER TONGUE

scunner gin ye didnae
laugh ye wad greet

SCOTS

flitting laverock breenge aboot redd up

nyaff giein it laldy sleekit sonsie

THE MITHER TONGUE

baffies howff thirled

puggie machine faither gantin for a gunk

BILLY KAY gaither yer graith thegither.

it's lows in time o aw the airts

dreich gallus watergaw

'One of the best 100 Scottish books ever written . . .
if I had my way there would be copies of these books
in every home in the land' – *Scotland on Sunday* shoogly

a thrawn wee besom pinkie braw

MAINSTREAM
PUBLISHING

Whether as a result of religious and political tension or the dilemma of finding a balance between the two languages, Scottish literature probably reaches its lowest ebb in the 17th century. By the 18th century, writers appear to have found a workable, at times brilliant, fusion of the two, and the best poetry of Ramsay, Fergusson and Burns is the result. But in the 17th century, the creative mix appears to have been beyond the Covenanter and Royalist poets who attempted it. The most successful poetry was very English, as is that of Drummond of Hawthornden, a friend and host to Ben Jonson, or very Scots in the case of Robert Simpson of Belltrees. Simpson's famous poem is a mock elegy on the Piper from Kilbarchan called Habbie Simpson. It is worth quoting as it illustrates both the subject matter and the verse form that featured even more prominently in the following century. This poem was in fact extremely popular and widely known, so much so that the verse form in which it is written became known as Standard Habbie.

Aye when he play'd the lasses leugh
To see him toothless, auld and teugh,
He wan his pipes besides Barcleugh,
Withouten dread!
Which after wan him gear eneugh;
But now he's dead.

The homely and parochial found ready expression in Scots, while the "high ground" of art poetry was almost entirely given over to English. But if the courtly tradition in Scots died a death, there was considerable compensation in the rise of a great folk literature and its expression in the ballads of the Borders and the North East. They occupy a subtle middle ground between the high and the low, the universal and the parochial, the aristocratic and the peasant. The language of the ballads appears to take the best from both English and Scots. Ballad Scots "may be said to include English and go beyond it" as Hamish Henderson describes it. The ballads of the Border lands especially are a curious mell of directness of speech and action yet fey other worldliness in ambience. The end of *Tam Lin* where the Queen of Fairies addresses Janet illustrates the style perfectly:

Out then spak the Queen o' Fairies,
And an angry woman was she:
'Shame betide her ill-far'd face,
And an ill death may she die,
For she's taen awa the boniest knight
In a' my companie.

'But had I kend, Tam Lin,' she says,
'What now this night I see,
I wad hae taen out thy twa grey een,
And put in twa een o' tree'

By Robert Simpson of Belltrees. 21

LIFE and DEATH

OF THE Piper of Kilbarchan

O R,
The Epitaph of Habbie Simpson, Who on his Dron bore bonny Flags,
He made his Cheeks as red as Crimson, And babed when he blew the Bags,

Kilbarchan now my say alas! Now all such pastime's quite away
For she hath lost her game & grace Sen Habbie's dead,
Both Trixie and the Maiden-trace
But what remic'd?
For no Man can supply his place,
Hab Simpson's dead,

Now who shall play the day it daws. He counted was a wall'd wight Man,
Or hunts up when the Cock he craws, And scarcely at Foot-ball he ran;
Or who can for our Kirk Town Cause, At every Game the gree he wan,
Stand us in stead? For pith and speed
On Bag-pipes now no body blaws, The like of Habbie was not then,
Sen Habbie's dead, But now he's dead,

Or who shall cause our Shearers shear, And then beside his valiant Acts,
Who will bend up the Brags of Weir? At Brydels he wan many placks.
Bring in the Bells or good play Meir, He babbed ay behind Folks backs,
In time of need, And shook his Head,
Hab Simpson could what needs you spear, Now we want many merry Craeks
But now he's dead. Sen Habbie's dead.

So kindly to his Neighbour neist, He was convoyer of the bride,
At Beltan and Saint Barchans Feast, With Kittock hanging at his side,
He blew and then held up his Breast, About the Kirk he thought a pride
as he were weid, the Ring to Lead
But now we need not him arrest? But now he may go but a Guide
For Habbie's dead. For Habbie's dead.

At Fairs he play'd before the Spear-men, So well's he keep'd his Decorum,
All gayly gaited in their Geer-men, And all the steps of Whip-meg morum,
Steel Bonnets, Jacks and Swords so clear, He slew a man and wae's me for him
Like any Bead. And bare the feed.
Now who will play before such Weir-men, But yet the man wan Hame before him
Sen Habbie's dead, and was not dead,

At Clark playes when he went to come, Aye when he play'd the Lasses leugh,
His Pipe play'd trimly to the Drum, To see him toothless, old and teuch
Like Bikes of bees he gart it bum, He wan his Pipes beside Barcleugh
And turn his Reed, withouten dread,
Now all our Pipers my sing dum, Which after wan him Gear eneugh
Sen Habbie's dead, But now he's dead,

And at Horse-races many a day, Alas for him my heart is fare,
Before the Black, the Brown and Gray, For of his Springs I got a Share,
He gart his Pipe when he did play, At every play, Race, Feast and Fair,
Both Skirl and Skried, But Guile or Greed
We need not look for piping mair,
Sen Habbie's dead,

F I N I S

The language of the ballads appears to take the best from both English and Scots

The ballads of course evolved in the oral tradition, crafted over many retellings. We shall never know if there was one original hand at work on any of them, or whether they emerged communally from cultural exchange by minstrels who wandered the land, bringing news and entertaining the people. What is perhaps apposite is that in the period which initiated the grave doubts many Scots entertain regarding their native culture, the country's finest literary creations were anonymous.

Before the Unions of the Crowns and of the Parliaments, Scots compared and contrasted their culture with others from the standpoint of independence. Their scope for self-criticism was international and with traditional ties to mainland Europe, healthily wide-ranging. Following the Unions, English culture came to dominate over all others, the only model for artistic and social life. The balance of the

United Kingdom was such that it was the Scots who had to travel to the English capital and impress there. The English had no need or desire to come North and impress the Scots in Scotland - no earthly reason to adapt to their culture. The Scots were the minority in the majority culture, and so it was assumed with the usual arrogance of the larger partner in any union, that the minority should eradicate its differences to accommodate the majority. We must also remember that underlying much of the Englishman's hostility to the Scots in those days was jealousy aroused by the invasion of his capital by thousands of Caledonians decidedly on the make.

The relationship between Dr Johnson and his biographer James Boswell reveals much about the tension between Scots and English identities in London society. In an exaggerated form their relationship sums up the relative status and attitudes abroad at the time regarding culture in general and language in particular. Boswell is a typical 18th-century Scots aristocrat doing everything he can to ingratiate himself with the London literati and nobility. Dr Johnson is a good example of the elitist Englishman, resentful of the Scots' inordinate influence in every sphere of city life and disdainful of their culture and their attempts to acquire his. Boswell's description of their first meeting encapsulates the ambience of the English capital.

Mr Davies mentioned my name, and respectfully introduced me to him. I was much agitated; and recollecting his prejudice against the Scotch, of which I had heard much, I said to Davies, "Don't tell him where I come from." -- "From Scotland," cried Davies roguishly. "Mr Johnson," said I, "I do indeed come from Scotland, but I cannot help it." I am willing to flatter myself that I meant this as a light pleasantry to soothe and conciliate him, and not as an humiliating abasement at the expense of my country. But however that might be, this speech was somewhat unlucky; for he seized the expression "come from Scotland," which I used in the sense of being of that country; and retorted, "That, Sir, I find, is what a very great many of your countrymen cannot help." This stroke stunned me a good deal; and when we had sat down, I felt myself not a little embarrassed, and apprehensive of what might come next.

What came next was that Boswell got the name of being Johnson's "Scotch cur", becoming - and here I must beg forgiveness of the gracious reader for the impropriety of introducing a Scotticism - the classic sook. The liaison had its reward nevertheless, in the finest biography in the English language. Boswell was prepared to suffer all insults and indignities in order to record the great man's sayings. His near family did not share his enthusiasm. His father Lord Auchinleck, like many of the Law lords, continued speaking Scots, which he used to good effect when he heard of his son's attachment to Johnson: "Jamie has gaen clean gyte... whae's tail dae ye think he has preened himsel tae noo? A dominie man!--- an auld dominie, wha keepit a schule an caaed it an Acaademy!" Johnson's manners during his tour of Scotland apparently justified the animal imagery frequently attributed in descriptions of him. Boswell's wife was so put out at the sight of her husband grovelling before the Englishman, she remonstrated that she "had often seen a bear lead by a man, but never till now had she seen a man lead by a bear!" An indication of the good Doctor's insensitivity and his supercilious dismissal of the notion that the Scots possessed any degree of culture at all are revealed by his remarks, made in obvious wonder and admiration when he visits an innovative school for the handicapped in Edinburgh:

It was pleasing to see one of the most desperate of human calamities capable of so much help: whatever enlarges hope will exalt courage; after having seen the deaf taught arithmetick, who would be afraid to cultivate the Hebrides?

His father Lord Auchinleck, like many of the Law lords, continued speaking Scots, which he used to good effect when he heard of his son's attachment to Johnson



Dr Samuel Johnson



James Boswell

Boswell of course was so thirled to Johnson, and like many Scots of the age so in thrall of English culture that he was all but oblivious to the great lexicographer's faults. He was particularly sensitive about his Scottish accent and frequently rails against the speech of his fellow countrymen when he comes across them in London: "the common style of company and conversation, the course jibes of this 'hamely' company...the Fife tongue and the Niddry's Wynd address were quite hideous."

The great literary language of the Makars, two centuries on, regarded as an uncouth provincial peculiarity! This was how far Scots had sunk in the second half of the 18th century. It was to sink even farther, and be regarded with odium by men who did not share Boswell's indiscriminating veneration for the English. David Hume was one of many Scots who felt no personal affinity with the English. He felt at home only in Edinburgh or Paris where he was fêted by the intelligentsia, and was forever railing against "the factious barbarians of London, who will hate me because I am a Scotsman and am not a Whig, and despise me because I am a man of letters". This did not prevent him following blindly the fashion of the age for Augustan refinement, the attainment of which necessitated the rooting out of all trace of Scottishness from one's writing.



David Hume

The balancing act which the Scots of the 18th century made between Scottish and English culture in their society and within the individual, produced an almost schizophrenic state of mind among people whose loyalties were constantly stretched in different airts. Allan Ramsay was one of the great poets who revived Scots as a literary language, yet he too was very much a man of his time and sometimes found it difficult to resolve the dichotomy which pulled him in different directions. His son and namesake, Allan Ramsay the painter helped found the Select Society in 1754. From its ranks sprang the Society for the English Language whose initial aim was to promote the correct use of English, and to that effect engaged a Mr Leigh, "a person well qualified to teach the pronunciation of the English tongue with propriety and grace"

Whereas in the previous century the terms to describe the language of the Lowlands alternated between English and Scots, as it had done interchangeably since the 16th century, there was now a conscious distinction made between the vernaculars of England and Scotland. As late as the first few decades of the 18th century, when schools referred to subjects available on their curriculum they would describe the class teaching the vernacular as the Scots class or the English class, and the terms would not imply a difference of emphasis in language teaching. By the middle of the 18th century however, you have schools starting to refer to teaching English "by the new method", which usually implied that an attempt would be made to teach southern pronunciation. Heriot's school in the 17th century claims it will "teach the bairns to read and write Scots distinctly", while by the time Edinburgh Academy is founded in the early 19th century, "a proper English articulation and accent" is insisted upon "in order

to remedy a defect in the education of boys in Edinburgh who are suffered to neglect the cultivation of their native tongue and literature during the whole time they attend the grammar schools". As you can see, by then English has become so all powerful that it is deemed "proper" and the "native tongue" while presumably the indigenous vernacular, the actual native tongue is dismissed as a defect! We are now beginning to recognise traits engraining themselves which persist in our own similarly Enlightened Age.!

The modern fallacy of Scots as a corruption of English really took root in this Augustan Age of the later 18th century. In order to facilitate the well-nigh impossible acquisition of spoken English, numerous books were published in Scotland which attempted to show by multifarious orthographic devices, how English was pronounced in England. Today, English orthography is a minefield for students from foreign countries, where the same symbol can represent totally different sounds e.g. gh in tough and through. If you do not know how they should be pronounced you will get little help from the orthography and are therefore prone to making mistakes in your pronunciation. The Scots were in the same position in the 18th century. Having little or no contact with native English speakers on a regular basis, their position was rendered even more difficult because they did not realise that many of the sounds they made were in fact Scots and not English. Among the books published for the help of our forefathers in this their hour of need were: *The Edinburgh New Method of Teaching English* by Godskirk and Hume in 1750, *Linguae Britannicae Vera Pronunciatio* by James Buchanan in 1757, *The Pronouncing Dictionary of the English Language* by John Burns in 1777, and William Scott's *A General View of English Pronunciation* published in Edinburgh in 1784.

The latter attempts systematically to give numbers to the various vowel sounds in English and by breaking up the words into numbered segments, reveal how they should be pronounced. He also points out common Scottish confusions: "bliss (made a verb) for bless, rid for red: o short with o long, as lo-ng for long and most for mo-st." The differentiation of the English sounds in not and note, clock and cloak or cot and coat was particularly confusing for Scots speakers, and they frequently got it, and still get it wrong. While dubbing the commentary, in English, for the Television series *The Mother Tongue* I used the verb forge pronouncing it with the same sound as door or bore. My unwitting Scotticism was immediately seized upon, and I was assured that the correct pronunciation of forge was to rhyme it with gorge or George. However, knowing where such concessions landed our ancestors, I stuck to what came naturally to me and pronounced the word as always, "foarge".

I use the example to illustrate the survival of Scots in our English pronunciation and also to show how difficult it must have been for the anglicisers. One of the results of the confusion was that many Scots overcompensated, and put in imagined English pronunciations to words where Scots and English shared the same sound e.g. if box is pronounced boax in Scots but box in English, it follows that coach in Scots must be coch in English and pork pronounced poark in Scots must needs be pawrk in English. The latter sound is still to be heard among "polite" speakers in Edinburgh today. The effect of this mixer-maxter must have been gey hilarious at times, as our ancestors frequently pit their fuit in it. The 20th-century dramatist, Robert McLellan portrayed the problem beautifully in his play *The Flowers o Edinburgh*, set in the period in question in an Auld Reikie awash with anglicisation. In this short scene a Scottish Augustan poet, Mr Dowie, is just being disabused of the notion that he writes English with propriety, by young Charles who has returned from London speaking a strangulated bourach of a pronunciation he insists is London English:

The modern fallacy of Scots as a corruption of English really took root in this Augustan Age of the later 18th century

CHARLES: Here we are, I think. Yes. You are sitting among the skulls, Doctor, addressing Death. You say: Thy boney hand lies chill upon my breast. Now add my carcase to thy loathsome feast.

DOWIE: Breist, no breast.

CHARLES: I know it has to read breist before it rhymes, but an Englishman says breast.

DOWIE: B-r-e-a-s-t?

CHARLES: Yes

DOWIE: Breist.

CHARLES: No, breast.

DOWIE: An Englishman says breast, for b-r-e-a-s-t?

CHARLES: Yes, doctor, have you ever been to England?

DOWIE: Na.

CHARLES: I thought so. English as a spoken language is quite foreign to you.

DOWIE: But I read naething else.

CHARLES: I said as a spoken language. You cannot possibly know how English words should sound. You have no right to write English poetry.

DOWIE: Nae richt! Dae they say that in London?

CHARLES: Englishmen say that.

DOWIE: Dear me. A lot o my rhymes are wrang, then?

CHARLES: A considerable number.

DOWIE: Dear me.

Doctor Dowie is racked to the core of his existence by this revelation, but his type persisted and went to even greater lengths to acquire *bon ton*. In the Scottish capital in particular a roaring trade for those practising the new science of elocution was available. In the 1760s a horde of out-of-work actors and linguistic eccentrics flocked to Edinburgh to teach English. Among their pupils were men who in their saner moments were outstanding philosophers, scientists and economists - the brilliant coterie of Enlightenment intellectuals who made Edinburgh one of the cultural capitals of Europe at the time. David Hume was so embarrassed with what he considered to be his inability to speak or write perfect English, that when he died he is said to have confessed, not his sins, but his Scotticisms! With Hume it appeared to be an *idée fixe* to out-English the English. He is said to have sent his manuscripts to such diverse experts as a linen-draper in Bristol and a cobbler in Norwich, in order to have any trace of Scotticism weeded out of the text before exposing it to the scrutiny of polite society. This from a man who was proudly Scottish, whose sceptical view of religion enraged large sections of that society, and who retained his principles till his dying day. Hume and his group were susceptible, gullible prey for the teachers who set up shop to give courses throughout the long Edinburgh winters. Advertisements like the following appeared in the newspapers, placed by teachers such as William Noble intent on exploiting upper class sensibilities:

...taking all imaginable care of the quantity, accent and manner of expression, by which he hopes that the barbarisms, so often and so justly complained of here, will be properly guarded against.

A London accent, far from being required, was actually quite a rarity among the teachers

That one is taken from the Caledonian Mercury of 19 September 1761. Ten years later in the Edinburgh Evening Courant a Mr Telfer, "lately arrived from London" offers classes which will not only promote English but make sure that no other language rears its head.

Having studied and taught the English language chiefly for several years past, he hopes he shall be able to teach his pupils that pronunciation and accent which are used by the most polite speakers and great care will be taken that no Scotch be spoken in time of school.

Mr Telfer stresses that he has spent some time in London to recommend himself to his charges. As most of the audience hadn't the faintest idea of what London English actually sounded like, scope for gulling private pupils must have been enormous. A London accent, far from being required, was actually quite a rarity among the teachers. Two of the most successful were Masson, an Aberdonian, and Sheridan, a Dubliner. The mind boggles as to what kind of English their pupils came out with. Boswell attended Sheridan's course of lectures, and the Scots Magazine reports that he was in the company of 300 gentlemen, "the most eminent in this country for their rank and abilities" Those few teachers who were native speakers of the required dialect of course could score points against those who had learned the right accent. In the preface to his highly successful *Only Sure Guide to the English Tongue; or New Pronouncing Spelling Book* of 1776, one of the English teachers, William Perry, berates "North British authors like Masson, the late Mr Drummond, etc; some of whom probably never crossed the Tweed." Mr Perry undertook a series of lectures in Edinburgh. His advertisement in the Caledonian Mercury shows how entertainment and music hall mixed with the serious attempt to teach refinement in speech. Presumably to illustrate the opposite of what he is aiming at and to introduce some burlesque black humour, he promises in the course of his lecture to introduce "...the following characters, viz The Schoolboy, Schoolmaster, Common Reader, Monotonist, Jingler, Stammerer, Word-monger, Clipper, Coiner and Distorter..." One of the elocutionists actually advertised his lecture as "a new species of literary entertainment" and Edinburgh was that hoatchin wi language teachers, one gets the feeling that many were simply jumping on a bandwagon, exploiting a fashion which in fact did not last much longer than a decade.

Another facet of the rush to acquire English was the publication of articles

'The Scots tongue, like most of the world's minority languages, is under pressure, and Billy Kay in this excellent and cogent survey draws together the strands of our concern' – *Daily Express*

'Kay is the best writer on his own language I have read since Burchfield on English; and his book should be put in schools, for it is capably seditious' – *The Herald*

'Moving, delightful, even inspiring' – *Edinburgh Review*

'It is not the kind of dry academic tome so cherished by linguistic nitpickers, but a bright, radical examination of the language which is at the heart of our existence' – *Aberdeen Press and Journal*

Scots: The Mither Tongue is a classic of contemporary Scottish culture and essential reading for those who care about their country's identity in the twenty-first century. It is a passionately written history of how the Scots have come to speak the way they do and has acted as a catalyst for radical changes in attitude towards the language.

In this completely revised edition, Kay vigorously renews the social, cultural and political debate on Scotland's linguistic future, and argues convincingly for the necessity to retain and extend Scots if the nation is to hold on to its intrinsic values. Kay places Scots in an international context, comparing and contrasting it with other lesser-used European languages, while at home questioning the Scottish Executive's desire to pay anything more than lip service to this crucial part of our national identity.

Language is central to people's existence, and this vivid account celebrates the survival of Scots in its various dialects, its literature and song. The mither tongue is a national treasure that thrives in many parts of the country and underpins the speech of everyone who calls themselves a Scot.

Billy Kay was born in Galton, Ayrshire, in 1951 and was educated at Kilmarnock Academy and Edinburgh University. Much of his work has been devoted to creating an awareness of Scottish culture. A writer and presenter for both radio and television, he is also the co-author of *Knee Deep in Claret: A Celebration of Wine and Scotland*, while his new book *The Scottish World* details the remarkable contribution the Scots have made to the modern world. He lives in Fife.



£10.99

Language and Linguistics/Scotland
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and books which gave detailed lists of "Scotticisms liable to be mistaken for English in this country". The first collection was compiled by James Elphinstone and was published, not surprisingly, as an appendix to Hume's Political Discourses in 1752. Elphinstone also published a supplementary list in the Scots Magazine in 1764. One of the areas he highlights is the problem of Scots stressing words on different syllables from the English. Our countrymen, "...so remote from propriety and unaided by system" naturally got things wrong; they stress e.g. April and harrass on the last syllable, ally and perverse on the penultimate syllable, clandestine and contribute on the antepenultimate syllable. When you have worked that lot out, you soon discover that many of these features which were excruciatingly embarrassing to the 18th-century cognoscenti have since become accepted pukka R.P. English! James Beattie, the poet, and compiler of one of the best-selling volumes stressed in his introduction that he wanted his readers to beware of using expressions which seem English, but are in fact the remnant of that huge area where Scots and English shared the same vocabulary while expressing it in different ways. One can only smile today when one thinks of men of the stature of David Hume and Adam Smith being fashed with trivialities such as the following examples from the book:

English was desired by the Scots, but for many it remained an impenetrable, foreign jargon

SCOTS

a bit bread
the better of a sleep
on the morn
a sore head
to my bed
he has got the cold
where do you stay

ENGLISH

a bit of bread
the better for a sleep
on the morrow
a headache
to bed
he has got a cold
where do you lodge, live, or dwell?

A glance at the two lists will show that the Scottish options are still in use in Scottish English today, proof of the survival of Scots even among those who don't consider they speak it. The anglicisers were perhaps more successful in the long term with the words that were unique to Scots. Beattie never regarded them as much of a problem:

With respect to broad Scotch words, I do not think any caution requisite, as they are easily known and the necessity of avoiding them is obvious.

The tragedy is that the Scots no longer took what they wanted from other cultures to enrich their own, as had been the case in the days of the Makars. They adopted uncritically English fashion and taste not realising that their attempt to write in the style of Addison, Pope or Shenstone was doomed to the same kind of failure as the attempt to root out their native idiom from their speech. In his autobiography which spans the years from 1722 to 1805, Dr Alexander Carlyle of Inveresk relates how he had been taught "a tolerable accent" of English by his aunt from London, "an accomplishment which in those days was very rare". His journal details the life of the Scottish community in London, in particular their frequenting of the British Coffee House, the London Scots' favourite rendezvous. English was desired by the Scots, but for many it remained an impenetrable, foreign jargon. In one incident in 1758, Carlyle asks a fellow Scot, Dr Charles Congalton, what he thinks of the English now that he has been among them for a few months? He replies that he is unable to reply honestly as he has not really made acquaintance with any of them, "...I never enter into conversation with the John Bulls, for, to tell you the truth, I don't yet well understand what they say." Carlyle knew personally many of the leading men of the Enlightenment such as William Robertson, Principle of Edinburgh University, whom he recalled, "...spoke broad Scotch in point of pronunciation and accent or tone ...his was the language of literature and taste, and of an enlightened and liberal mind." The great geologist James Hutton, Sir Walter Scott, and many others continued speaking Scots as their natural language long after the fashion for Augustan elegance had abated.

In writing however, prose had become almost completely unscotched by the latter half of the 18th century. Yet it had not yet become English. When Lord Mansfield commented to Alexander Carlyle his feeling that he was not reading English in the works of Hume and Robertson, the sage of Inveresk gave this perceptive reply:

to every man bred in Scotland the English language was in some respects a foreign tongue, the precise value and force of whose phrases he did not understand and therefore was continually endeavouring to word his expressions by additional epithets or circumlocutions which made his writing appear both stiff and redundant.

The Scots literati had as yet mastered only the surface level of English, a detached register devoid of emotional resonance. They wrote English perfectly and with propriety, in the same way as for example a German intellectual who had similarly become fluent in the language and mastered its structure and surface would have done. Ironically this foreignness of English written by Scots, with its painstaking, precise correctness and formality, made it the perfect medium for discussing science and philosophy in whose various branches the men of the Scottish Enlightenment excelled.

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by Gordon
Craigie

Winston

My* Part in

EVERY time the state broadcaster or the Establishment-owned media comes up with yet another *Who is the Greatest Briton of All Time* cringefest we should all know that the result is likely to be a foregone conclusion. In a variation on the famous quip describing football as being a sport where 22 players chase a ball for 90 minutes and, in the end, Germany always wins, most 'Great Briton' contests involve some patriotic (if you're English) debate about the merits of all the usual (English) suspects before concluding, once

The top 10 are exclusively English with the first Scot in the list, Alexander Fleming, coming in at number 20

again, that the honour undoubtedly belongs to one great (English) man – Winston Churchill.

As evidence of the Anglocentric nature of any of these celebrations of great Britishness, consider as just one example the 2002 BBC series *100 Greatest Britons*. Out of that 100 only 10 are technically Scots – I say 'technically' since we're not likely to want to claim Tony Blair but his Edinburgh birthplace no doubt allows the British Nationalists to claim that a 10% representation is fair, so stop whingeing Scotland...! The top 10 are exclusively English with the first Scot in the list, Alexander Fleming, coming in at number 20 – apparently discovering penicillin and being awarded the Nobel Prize doesn't merit being ranked above Thatcher, various royals, a couple of Beatles

Churchill being carried on a chair into the Caird Hall in Dundee
© DC Thomson



Churchill

His Downfall!

or... Michael Crawford??? It is an astonishing list, and well worth checking out. Anyway, Churchill came out top of the heap in the opinion of the great British public and, as we are being constantly reminded these days, *we must always respect the will of the people!*

So, when the Scottish Green MSP Ross Greer tweeted recently that Churchill was, in fact, a "white supremacist mass murderer", well, that was pretty much a case of 'light blue touch paper and retreat!' (Speaking of fireworks, Guy Fawkes made it into that top 100 in 30th position, ahead of John Logie Baird, Alexander Graham Bell, William Wallace, Robert the Bruce...) To be fair, Ross more than held his own in the ensuing stooshie when he was attacked mercilessly by a range of British Nationalist commentators/

Guy Fawkes made it into that top 100 in 30th position, ahead of John Logie Baird, Alexander Graham Bell, William Wallace, Robert the Bruce...

nonentities (delete as appropriate) despite being labelled, among other things, as a "thick ginger turd"! But the main, balanced, takeaway from that particular episode was that Churchill is most definitely a figure who still divides opinion.

Churchill (or, to give him his full title so we're in absolutely no doubt about his entrenchment in the British Establishment, Sir Winston Leonard Spencer-Churchill KG OM CH TD DL FRS RA!) was born into an aristocratic family in 1874 at their ancestral home, Blenheim Palace. He was educated at Harrow and Sandhurst before being commissioned into the British Army in 1895. Four years later he left the army to pursue his political and journalistic ambitions. He entered the Westminster parliament at his second attempt, in 1900, as the Conservative MP for Oldham, with his election expenses being paid by his cousin, the Duke of Marlborough no less. By the time the 1906 general election came around he had decided that he was more Liberal than Tory, possibly then as now difficult to tell the difference really, and was duly elected as a Liberal in the carefully-chosen safe seat of Manchester North West with his election expenses this time covered by his uncle, Lord Tweedmouth – hmmm, there's a pattern developing here. In 1908 he was promoted to the Cabinet as President of the Board of Trade but, unfortunately for him, the 'law of unintended consequences' was to come into play. Under the regulations of the time, newly appointed cabinet ministers had to seek re-election at a by-election, which he then lost, ironically enough, to the Conservatives! According to Andrew Roberts in his book *Churchill: Walking with Destiny* his reaction to this defeat was quite stoical: "If I had won Manchester now, I should probably have lost it at the general election. Losing it now I shall hope to get a seat which will make me secure for many years." No hint of entitlement there then!





Irish suffragette Mary Maloney rang her bell at every Churchill speech! © Illustrated London News Ltd/Mary Evans

Demonstrating the kind of opportunism that makes an absolute mockery of what the British Establishment term 'democracy', the Liberals quickly decided to award a peerage to their ailing Dundee MP Edmund Robertson in order to create a 'safe seat' for their rising star. So, the newly ennobled Baron Lochee dutifully shuffled off to the House of Lords and Churchill consulted his *Encyclopaedia Britannica* to find out where exactly Dundee was... probably! Anyway, on 9 May 1908 he became the Liberal MP for Dundee with 44% of the vote on an 85% turnout, though it should be noted that the electorate at that time consisted only of male householders over the age of 21. Dundee had in fact returned only Liberal MPs since 1859 until a 'Labour Representation Committee' candidate had sneaked into second place in the previous (1906) election by around 700 votes. Prior to 1859 the MPs had been exclusively Whigs, essentially the forerunners of the Liberal Party, so it would seem that Dundee was rightly regarded as a relatively safe choice for a guaranteed shoo-in. In a letter to his mother Churchill described his new fiefdom as "a life seat and cheap and easy beyond all experience". Indeed!

Churchill was re-elected in Dundee in 1910 (twice), though his share of the vote decreased on both occasions. He was promoted to Home Secretary before being appointed First Lord of the Admiralty in 1911, a position he was effectively dismissed from in 1915 on the insistence of the Conservatives as part of their conditions for agreeing to support the all-party coalition government during World War One. He remained an MP despite rejoining

Many Scots identified Churchill as being responsible for ordering British troops and tanks into Glasgow to quell the 'Battle of George Square' in 1919

the army after his sacking, but in 1917 he was reappointed to the government as Minister of Munitions. As a 'new' ministerial appointee this, again, necessitated a by-election in Dundee which he won convincingly in a two-horse race. He was soon to be back in campaign mode again though as the 1918 general election, called immediately after the war had ended, saw the dawn of a new era in many ways. It was the first general election to be held on a single day (previously general election polling had been spread over several weeks), and was the first to be conducted with the extended franchise introduced by the Representation of the People Act 1918, which meant that *some* women, (those over the age of 30 classed as "householders, the wives of householders, occupiers of property with an annual rent of £5, [or] graduates of British universities"), and *all* men over the age of 21 were eligible to vote. Unsurprisingly perhaps, in the jingoistic aftermath of war, the prevailing Conservative-Liberal coalition was overwhelmingly endorsed, and Churchill was comfortably re-elected in Dundee as the Liberal Coalition candidate.

However, many of the policies which Churchill either supported, espoused or implemented were not those likely to gain great favour with the newly enfranchised electorate of Dundee once the realities of post-war imperialist Britain began to take hold. Notably the large Irish population were not impressed by his attitude to their homeland, and women had not forgotten that he had not been a supporter of their suffrage movement. Many Scots identified Churchill as being responsible for ordering British troops and tanks into Glasgow to quell the 'Battle of George Square' in 1919. Allied to this was the fact that he was never, outwith elections, to be seen anywhere near the city he supposedly represented – it would be fair to say that his 'seat for life' was on a shoogly peg, if you'll pardon the mixed metaphor.

In 1922, Churchill's re-election campaign in Dundee was to be hampered by his being carried around in a chair as he recovered from an appendix operation. Brian Cox, the Dundee-born actor, has related a story passed down by his uncle: As Churchill was being carried up the stairs to the Caird Hall, his uncle shouted to the four men carrying him, "How much did he pay ye?" When they replied, "A pound!" Cox's uncle came back with "Il' gie ye twa if ye drap him!" Professor Hugh Begg, a local historian, has researched the events leading up to this election and concludes, "In short,



Edwin Scrymgeour and his wife, Jeanette, leaving Dundee Railway Station for London.
© DC Thomson

by 1922 Churchill's reforming zeal of the pre-war years, and the enthusiasm of the electorate for a war time leader had gone. They were replaced by much local bitterness and disillusionment with Churchill's record both as a member of the central government and as a largely absentee local Member of Parliament. Churchill's left-wing radicalism of 1908 had been transformed into the right-wing tendencies which were to characterise the rest of his long and turbulent political life. That was all to count against him in the general election of 1922."

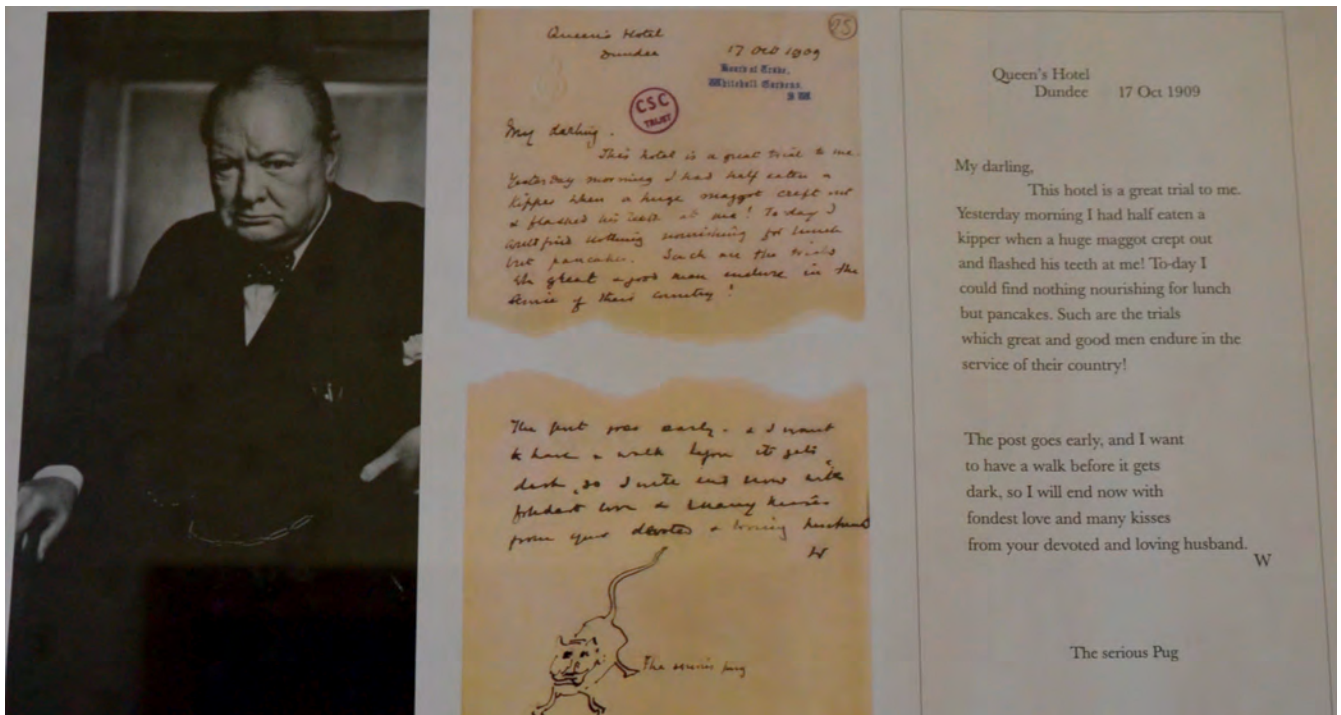
Now, you would think that perhaps with the people starting to see through the Liberal and Conservative dogma of the time a largely working-class city would be fertile ground for the socialist ideas of the Labour Party – stop laughing at the back! – but Dundee has always set itself apart from the rest of Scotland. Instead, step forward a socialist whose prime objective was the eradication of alcohol from society – Edwin 'Neddy' Scrymgeour. A pioneer of the Scottish temperance movement, Scrymgeour represented the Scottish Prohibition Party in Dundee parliamentary elections starting in the 1908 by-election when Churchill first appeared on the local scene. Starting from a lowly point – he gained 655 votes to Churchill's 7,079 in that first outing – Neddy increased his share of the vote at each subsequent poll.

Despite having won five elections in a row, if Churchill felt comfortable in Dundee then he was seriously misjudging the situation. Even in 1908, each time he tried to campaign publicly, he would be followed around by a suffragette, Mary Maloney, who would ring a hand-bell constantly beside his podium as he made his speeches. Many of his actions as Home Secretary had not gone down well with significant sections of the Dundee electorate. For example, sending troops in against civilians, not only in the George Square incident but also against miners in Wales and carters and dockers in Dundee (his own constituency!), and ordering

Each time he tried to campaign publicly, he would be followed around by a suffragette, Mary Maloney, who would ring a hand-bell constantly beside his podium as he made his speeches

the 'Black and Tans' into Ireland. Add to this that he was rarely seen in Dundee, he never lived in the city, and was increasingly judged to be generally negligent in regard to his constituency, devoting all of his efforts to 'national' issues. In *The Scottish Historical Review*, historian Dr William Walker describes one interpretation of this disenchantment as being that some influential local figures felt Churchill "was born a Tory, is still a Tory, and will always be a Tory ... has done nothing for the working classes of Dundee [but] uses them for his own purposes". He also cites local union leader, John Sime, in describing Churchill as "one of the most dangerous men to the peace of the world", tallying with Scrymgeour's view that Churchill was "the man particularly associated with imperialism and war". And, to top it all off, Churchill managed to get himself on the wrong side of the influential DC Thomson owner, David Couper Thomson. This resulted in less than helpful coverage in both of the local newspapers, the *Dundee Courier* and the *Dundee Advertiser*, and then, as now, many voters would be guided by what they read in their paper.

Although the Dundee electorate had been increased by some 300% in 1918, this had not immediately affected voting patterns. By 1922 however, a 'perfect storm' was gathering around Churchill. The



On one of his rare stopovers in Dundee, Churchill wrote home complaining about finding a maggot in his breakfast!" Credit: Gordon Craigie

Irish community had turned against him, the jute workers and employers were not impressed by his lack of support for their industry, women had recognised his continuing disregard for their votes, and the population of Dundee had, in general, developed an awareness of international politics that was wary of Churchill's persistent imperialism. Scrymgeour, and the Labour candidate Edmund Morel, were to be the principle beneficiaries of this groundswell as being seen to offer more radical alternatives. That Ned was a born and bred Dundonian, a former Town Councillor, and a constant presence in the city in stark contrast to Churchill's absentee landlordism, was probably not insignificant either. On 15 November 1922 Edwin Scrymgeour was elected as Dundee's first choice MP with a 10,000 majority. Edmund Morel was also elected in second place and, adding further insult to injury, Churchill's National Liberal running-mate, David Johnstone, came third in the contest. Yes, the citizens of Dundee had consigned their sitting MP, the former Home Secretary, First Lord of the Admiralty, Secretary of State for War, and (then) current Secretary of State for the Colonies, to fourth place and, effectively, the dole queue!

Churchill reacted to his defeat with all the class and dignity we should expect from a man of his privileged status in society, predicting that his departure would see the grass grow over Dundee's cobbled streets and that [its] industry would shrink and decay. Nice! In a more public display of nonchalance however,

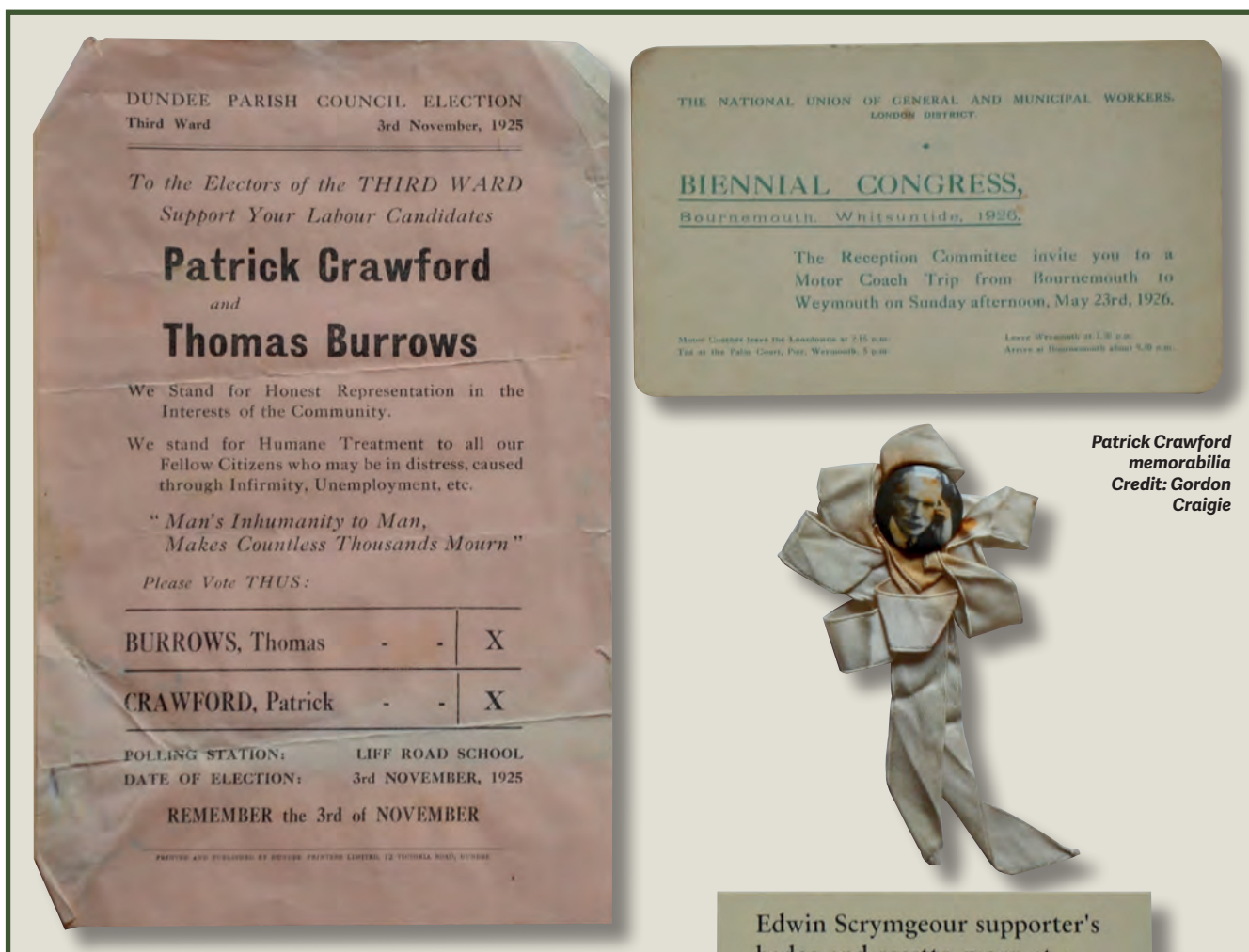
Ned was a born and bred Dundonian, a former Town Councillor, and a constant presence in the city in stark contrast to Churchill's absentee landlordism

he chose to comment that, "In the twinkling of an eye, I found myself without an office, without a seat, without a party, and without an appendix." Unabashed, the bold Winston regrouped and eventually found his way back into Westminster in 1924, this time as a 'Constitutionalist', in Epping. He would be re-elected in Epping in 1929, but not before rejoining the Conservatives in what was to be his final flip-flop on political allegiance. A flip-flopping Tory – who'd believe it? The rest of his political career, as they say, is history and well-documented elsewhere – this article contents itself with the fact that Dundee was 'well rid'!

One thing that Churchill apparently didn't have to contend with, as it appears to have happened during later Dundee elections, was a song in support of Neddy Scrymgeour. To the tune of *Tramp! Tramp! Tramp!*, an American Civil War song later adapted by Irish nationalists (*God Save Ireland*) and also Andy Cameron (*Ally's Tartan Army*), children would sing in the streets:

Vote, vote, vote for Neddy Scrymgeour
He's the man tae gie ye ham n eggs
If ye dinnae vote for him
We will pan yer windies in
An ye'll never get the chance tae vote again!

To the victor, the spoils, and Edwin Scrymgeour remains the only Prohibitionist MP ever elected to Westminster. He served the city of Dundee as MP until 1931 when he was ousted by the magnificently named Dingle Foot as the Liberals mounted a comeback. There was more to Scrymgeour than simply his anti-alcohol, prohibitionist stance. Professor Begg neatly summarises Scrymgeour's 1922 victory thus: "The local man the persistent, pacifist, prohibitionist, Neddy Scrymgeour had come top of the poll at his sixth attempt to become a Member of Parliament. It was said that his local support was so great that the hard-drinking voters of Dundee by then disliked Churchill so much that they trooped out of their public houses to vote for a man who supported the abolition of alcohol. Scrymgeour and the pacifist Morel had clearly benefitted from the growing support from trade unionists and others for the Labour movement in Dundee." Scrymgeour was indeed a true socialist and perhaps a man ahead of his time as he refused to compromise his beliefs by joining



Patrick Crawford
memorabilia
Credit: Gordon
Craigie

Edwin Scrymgeour supporter's
badge and rosette, worn at a
General Election, 1920s

the mainstream Labour movement. Dr Walker argues that before World War One, "Scrymgeour had stood for 'justice for all' ... after the war [he] staked his chances on such items as prohibition; adult suffrage; initiative and referendum; peace, arbitration and disarmament; and 'production for use instead of profit'". Sounds to me like the kind of politician we need now as much as we did then, though highly unlikely to be named in a BBC poll anytime soon!

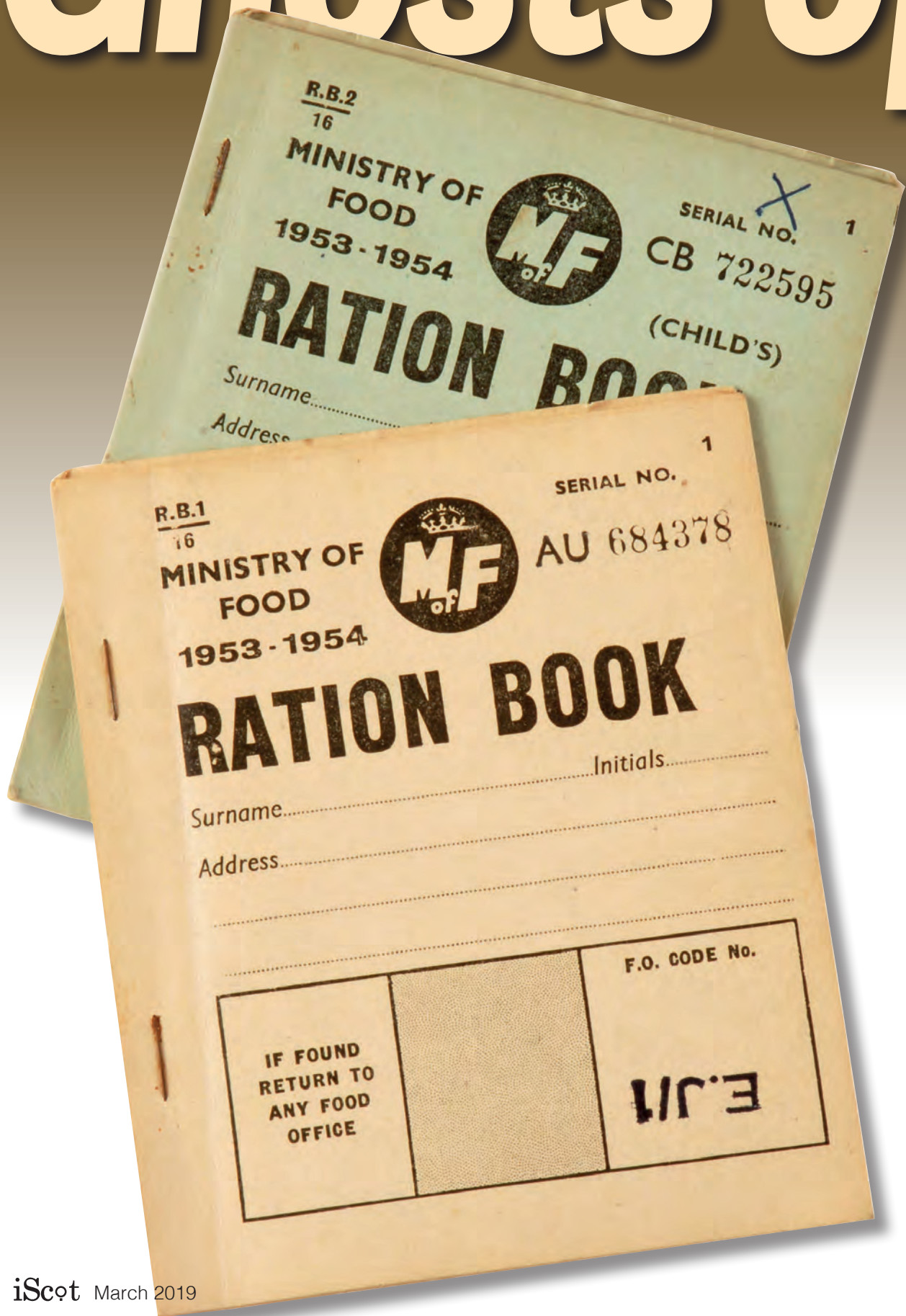
Personal footnote... for any reader that is still wondering about the title of this article – what exactly is **my*** part in Churchill's downfall? Well, I am proud to say that Edwin Scrymgeour's election agent during that momentous 1922 general election campaign was my Great Grandfather, Patrick Crawford. Patrick was a fervent trade unionist, attended the 1926 General and Municipal Workers Congress as a delegate, and stood as a socialist candidate for Dundee Parish Council. Through his political activities he became personally friendly with the then rising stars of the Labour Party – Nye Bevan, Jennie Lee and Clement Attlee, all of whom visited him at his Lochee home on several occasions. A lifelong advocate of Home Rule for Scotland I have no doubt that he would be similarly active in today's independence movement, horrified at what has become of the Labour Party, and proud that his home city of Dundee has acquired the nickname of Yes City.

And another thing... off the top of my head, here's a random selection of Scots who *didn't* make it into that BBC *Top 100 Britons* list: Robert Burns, Adam Smith, Mary Slessor, David Hume, Jane Haining, Andrew Carnegie, Jennie Lee, Keir Hardy, Mary Queen of Scots, Hugh MacDiarmid, Flora MacDonald, Charles Rennie Mackintosh, Winnie Ewing, Thomas Telford, Mary Barbour...

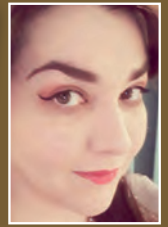


Patrick Crawford
and Jennie Lee
Credit: Gordon Craigie

Ghosts of



the mind



by Clyn
Gallagher

Enoch Powell



WHEN Enoch Powell was asked what was his greatest regret, he paused and answered "I wish I had been killed in the war."

I come not to praise Powell, and he's been buried for years anyway, but I can point out that while Powell was centuries behind his fellow man in many ways, in generational nihilism he was ahead of the curve. We have an entire ruling age group, brought up in the shadow of Empire and cultural determinism, facing an existential crisis. In their minds, to be British brings with it an imperialist superiority, central to their identity is knowledge that their country stood alone against the Axis of Darkness, and crashing against this is the small voice asking "but what did YOU do?"

These people never had to 'prove themselves' in the war that ripples onward today, and so they continue to do battle with ghosts of the mind. The Germans, mostly, although there's a cultural antipathy towards the French that Britain can't seem to shake.

For Britain to be in any kind of partnership with foreigners, trading precious blood-won sovereignty for such grubby things as trade deals, is to betray those great-great ancestors we never met. We made do with rationing. We stood alone. We can do it again.

"We" though? You did nothing. You stand there, clattering the bones of the dead like some ghoulish puppeteer, putting words in the skulls of men who may have been better, might have been worse, but who did what you couldn't.

There's something supremely self-indulgent about a group who can look around at the food on the shelves and think

"yeah, we can get through some rationing. It's character-building." What would your ancestors have thought of you, throwing this away because of some misplaced idea of "sovereignty"?

Don't we want to maximise our chances of peace, prosperity, locking countries into cycles of negotiation instead of sending in the guns, the tanks, the bombs? This isn't a rhetorical flourish, I'm genuinely asking. Why do you want to throw this next generation under the bus?

Maybe it's because Western society has changed so much, so quickly. There's a part in *Coming Up For Air* where Orwell's protagonist, George Bowling, ruminating on the past and resenting the present, sits down in a café and orders a coffee with two frankfurters. Using his dentures to saw through the skin, "the thing burst in my mouth like a rotten pear. A sort of horrible soft stuff was oozing all over my tongue. But the taste!" Infuriated by this nefarious Würstchen, he storms out. The world has changed so much, you can't even have a decent sausage, instead suffering "bombs of filth bursting inside your mouth."

*You stand there,
clattering the
bones of the dead
like some ghoulish
puppeteer*



Bowling would have voted Brexit – not because of trade deals, or the Strasbourg convoy, or Greece. He would have voted Brexit as a blow against the future. Bowling didn't fight in the First World War, and he barely notices the impending bombs heading towards Lower Binfield, being too busy railing against the fact that everything's *changed*. He didn't earn this future, and he resents that his memories haven't remained trapped in amber.

Orwell, of course, wasn't above a bit of historical revisionism – the man took his pen name from England's patron saint and once fell out with his wife over her oversight regarding a butter dish, for heaven's sake – and this glum disapproval of the industrialised future runs through his work like, well, a Suffolk river. He wrote that in another life he would have been a vicar, not having been "born for an age like this". Sudden change, too quickly made, makes for a bamboozled, resentful, irritated generation who want to retreat to memories real or imagined.

There's a cultural idea of Britishness – and this in itself is no bad thing, not by any means – where vicars ride bicycles along country roads, society is governed by a cross-class sense of fair play, and people would rather grumble quietly than indulge in a little light arson. It's decidedly sepia-toned, very little England, and almost entirely imaginary. It's no coincidence that this vision brings with it a decidedly 40's aura, echoed in WW2 kitsch. And it's no coincidence that the Leave campaign

Sudden change, too quickly made, makes for a bamboozled, resentful, irritated generation who want to retreat to memories real or imagined

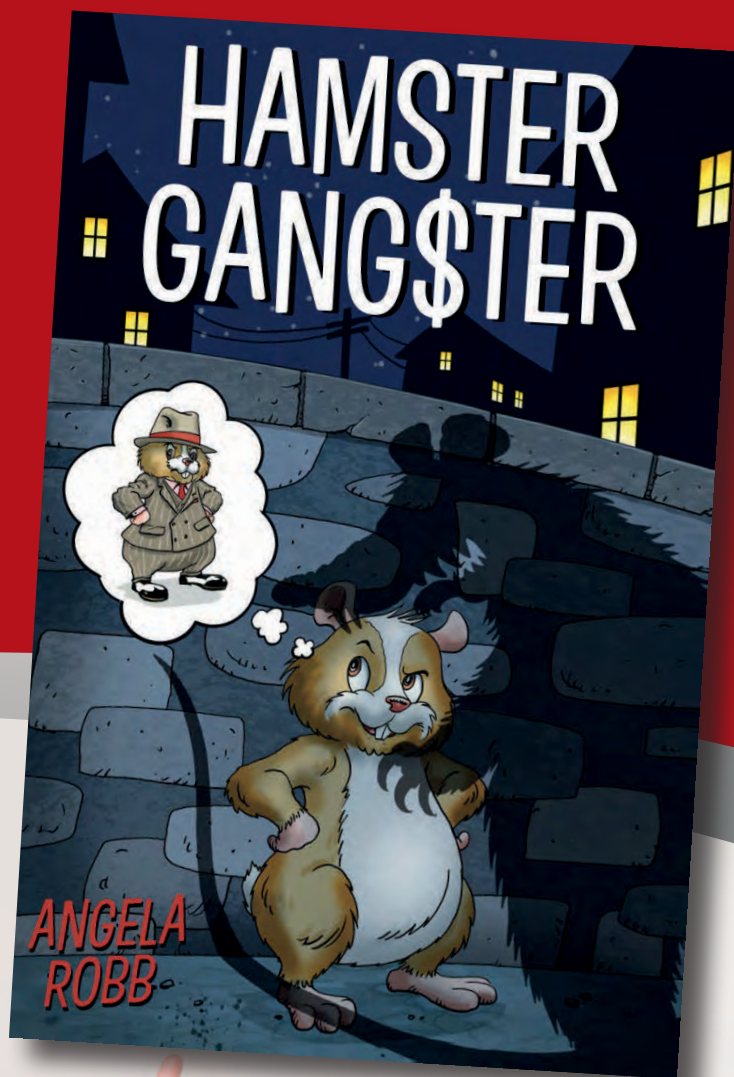


and the subsequent Brexit rallying cries have been so steeped in this nostalgia. There was a time when "we" stood alone and came through the other side as winners, and then the world spun and suddenly Germany went from defeated enemy to a leader in the European project. The UK has never been able to move forward from this, and so it clings to this one certainty – suspicious, angry, and ready to pull the pin on a project it doesn't understand.

Bowling was wrong. The future isn't a suspicious sausage. It's young people being thrown under the tanks by an older generation playing at soldiers.

DEBUT CHILDREN'S NOVEL

from iScot short story
writer Angela Robb



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fluffy pet*

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by Bill Dale

What is the meaning of the SNP Spring Conference Resolution 1 based on the misnamed “Sustainable Growth” Commission report?



IT IS EASY for the average person or indeed the committed independence supporter to give up when the topics of finance and economics arise in discussion. It is interesting, that in dealing with thousands of people in our work on Reframing, we found only a handful who had actually read the report from cover to cover. This is understandable, for the report itself is exceptionally difficult to digest and poorly presented, without even consistent numbering from start to finish, and with much repetition. As a result, few people have really appreciated what the key points of the report are and many have merely accepted at face value the presentations and summaries from members of the commission itself.

As I discuss later, the original report was seriously flawed in many respects, not just in its poor presentation but also in its contents. Why does this matter? Surely we need to trust that we are being given an accurate representation of the contents?

It matters because we are now being asked to approve as policy the essential content of the report along with statements about how a move to a Scottish currency is being accelerated compared to the recommendations of the report. But is this actually what is being proposed?

Please note that under the proposed resolution Scotland would be **forced to borrow in a foreign currency** since it would have no means of issuing its own sovereign currency. We need to have our own fully empowered central bank up and running on Day 1 of independence, with our own currency in order to avoid the trap of incurring borrowings in a currency over which we have no control.

Despite reports in the press and articles from SNP supporters, the proposal is not a commitment to move to a Scottish currency as soon as practicable after a positive decision in favour of independence. Rather, the proposal is that a transition to a Scottish currency should be **debated** by the Scottish Parliament before the end of the first term.

Further, the resolution proposes that the six tests recommended in the commission report should be used to determine if Scotland is ready for its own currency. This is not the same as committing to a Scottish currency from day one of independence, indeed it is almost identical to the proposal in the original report, but with some nice words round it, presumably to mollify those of us who want the protection offered by a Scottish currency.

To see how long this could take, imagine that we are on the day after a decision to move to independence has been taken, by whatever means. There will then follow a transition period, three years would seem not unreasonable,

though what is reasonable is itself moot having seen the antics of the Westminster regime in its dealings with the EU. Assume that by the end of four years in the first Parliament after the end of the transition period, the decision is taken to move to a Scottish currency. We would then need to undertake the work necessary to implement the currency.

What is that, I hear you say, some of this work could be undertaken in parallel? Difficult to see how this could be done if the decision is still open, and the option could be rejected by parliament, which could happen for any number of reasons e.g. the six tests not met, so MSPs are unconvinced, the SNP are no longer in power or there is no appetite for change etc. Assuming that the decision is positive, then the work to actually set the currency up, including recruiting key staff, could take around three years. This makes a total of **ten years** to get a Scottish currency! Is that really what we are being told?

The bigger issue for me is that the original report was seriously flawed in many respects, not just in its poor presentation but also in its contents. For example, the recommendation on currency had no consideration of alternatives, nor any rationale for the recommendation. When I asked a member of the commission how this had been decided, I was told that top experts had looked at it and that was their conclusion. On probing for the rationale, I received no explanation. When questioned on what the commission response was to eminent economists' criticisms of the report, particularly of the risks of borrowing in a foreign currency (£ Sterling), the response was the highly enlightening "They're wrong!". Now this may very well be the case, but, without robust analysis, references and evidence, much of the report consists of assertion and generalisation.

The work to actually set the currency up, including recruiting key staff, could take around three years



Clement Attlee

At the SNP National Assemblies, there was no opportunity to discuss with the authors or any of their representatives the key issues such as currency and the economic framework, e.g. acceptance of GERS. There was no engagement or Q and A regarding these issues. There was plenty of discussion among party members in small groups, but no opportunity and no attempt to respond to the concerns raised.

Most readers of my pieces in iScot and in our workshops on Reframing are aware of the power of frames to set the narrative. Accepting a frame can determine an outcome regardless of the facts or logic of the situation. That is why I was, and remain, deeply concerned at the language used in the original report and the resolution. We have discussed before the vast resources and money expended by the establishment to set the narrative, not only to conceal the true wealth of Scotland (McCrone report anyone?) but also to present the neoliberal frame so frequently and so insidiously that most people are unaware that they have accepted neoliberal concepts and conclusions. Indeed, many in the independence movement and on the left of politics present neoliberal ideas without even realising it, at the same time claiming that they reject neoliberal concepts such as austerity.

The neoliberal worldview did not come about by accident. After the second world war the elite set up various think tanks and institutions to promote

the ideas which are now widely known as neoliberalism. Indeed Clement Attlee's progressive measures to promote growth were attacked by the neoliberals and since then UK Governments of all shades have consistently adopted neoliberalism. In the UK the Institute for Economic Affairs was one think tank which actively promoted the tenets of neoliberalism, particularly in combating any restraints on the tobacco industry. It is now known that secret funding was provided by British American Tobacco to the IEA from 1963! As of 2019, BAT and other big tobacco funding is a matter of public record. In this decade the IEA campaigned vigorously against plain-paper packaging for cigarettes.

Perhaps the single biggest influence on neoliberal frames was the Austrian economist, Friedrich Hayek. Not only was Hayek one of the originators of the term neoliberal, but his publications formed the basis of the Thatcher/Reagan axis of dismantling the state. There is the famous tale which relates that after Margaret Thatcher became Conservative Party leader in 1975 she responded to a request to define conservative beliefs by reaching into her handbag, pulling out a well-worn copy of Hayek's "The Constitution of Liberty" and stating forcefully "This is what we believe in!". Out of this came the consequences that we are all aware of, particularly in Scotland. The doctrine of the free market, the belief in competition, in maximising profits no matter the impact on the environment or the people involved.

An integral part of neoliberal ideology is the codifying of rules to constrain governments, particularly those governments who seek to put the interests of their population ahead of those of "the market" (a euphemism for the super-rich). Along with these rules came a drive to "depoliticise" institutions such as the Central Bank and regulatory authorities. This effectively removed the power of people in a democracy to influence economic decisions relating to their welfare, by replacing political accountability with so-called technocratic management - "experts" in position of authority operating under inflexible rules to run an economy without political oversight. Of course this led to crises such as the Great Financial Crash of 2008, but that was over ten years ago, and the tools and worldview of neoliberalism are still predominant, even if it is unpopular to admit it.

One of the frames which is so pervasive and damaging is the false equivalence between household budgets and national state budgets. As I covered in previous iScot articles, the neoliberal dogma holds that, just like a normal household, the state has to keep within its means, keep borrowing under control, reduce government spending and run a surplus if possible. All of this sounds eminently reasonable to the ordinary person, particularly those struggling to make ends meet. Even the word used to characterise government spending in excess of tax and other receipts is carefully chosen to reinforce the frame.

If instead of "government deficit" we talked about "government investment" in the economy we would be closer to the truth. Every time you reduce the investment in the economy, you force private individuals and private firms to either reduce spending (reducing GDP) or to borrow from the financial sector (increasing bank profits). Indeed reducing deficit and thereby reducing GDP provides the establishment with an even bigger stick to explain why they need to continue with austerity policies. Eventually the increase in private indebtedness reaches a limit and there is a significant decline or even a crash.

It is now known that secret funding was provided by British American Tobacco to the IEA from 1963!

But how can the state avoid this? It can avoid it because a sovereign state has the ability to issue currency and to ensure that tax is paid in this currency. In point of fact, there is no need for any state to borrow, unless it wishes to support bond markets. Contrary to popular belief, it is the bond markets that are dependent on the state and not the state that is beholden to the bond markets. Of course, there are limits to how far this can be done, but, there are many examples throughout history of states successfully running with a public sector "deficit" many times higher than the extremist rules suggested in the growth report. These rules are implicitly included in the resolution as part of Test One of the innocuous sounding, but potentially extremely damaging Six Tests.

Austerity arose as a result of this, in particular the focus on reducing the "deficit" in economies. Hayek's original works envision the rich as worthy, the poor as undeserving. Austerity programmes are designed to move even more wealth from the poor and middle earners to the rich. This is where both the "Growth Commission" report and the related resolution move into territory that can be described as disingenuous at best, and duplicitous at worst. Hold on a moment, this is a pretty strong statement, how can this be?

Well, along with many if not most independence supporters, I welcome all the positive statements regarding the rejection of austerity and the failed UK economic approach based on debt and lending, but when we look at the mechanisms proposed for an independent Scotland we find the neoliberal tools of Deficit Reduction, Limits to levels of Public Debt (but no mention of the high levels of private debt and the need to reduce this), depoliticising the institutions of the state responsible for dealing with the economy, presenting a move to a Scottish currency as a priority, but including mechanisms that practically guarantee a long period of using Sterling. **There is no firm commitment to move quickly to a Scottish currency.**

I am sorry to say that I have had conversations with indy activists who are enthusiastic about the resolution. Their argument goes along the following lines. "Look, most people have no understanding of economic affairs and indeed are turned off by it. What we need is a way to tell people what they want to hear so that they will support Scottish independence. This way we will gain support from people who were concerned about the economy in 2014." This reminds me of people who seek short term advantage by telling people what they want to hear, even if they have to contradict themselves when speaking to different people. Of course they are usually found out and then they are persona non grata with those they have deceived.

By this thinking the proposal for a dedicated indy supporter is "We are giving you the Scottish currency you asked for!" To the establishment figures in banking and finance "Don't worry, we have made sure that it will be next to impossible to ditch the pound Sterling for the foreseeable future, for ten years at least." Not only is this indefensible for any party wanting the trust of the electorate, it is highly unlikely to work, not least because supporters of indy who see through the boilerplate text to the meat of the likes of the Six Tests are unlikely to be motivated to campaign for such a future for Scotland. As it was put in one conversation I had with a highly informed, thoughtful activist, this resolution is forcing us to a situation where the choice in any referendum would be between remaining as a virtual Colony of Greater England,

Hayek's original works envision the rich as worthy, the poor as undeserving



or becoming a Vassal State of the City of London and the banks.

So what to do? Well many activists and commentators have already written well-argued critiques of the resolution. If there really is an intention to move away from neoliberal ideology and austerity policies, then we must remove all references to the mechanisms of neoliberalism from the resolution. Specifically, remove endorsement of the "Growth Commission" as a framework for Scotland, remove all references to the Six Tests and commit to moving to a Scottish currency rapidly, for example, stating that on Day 1 of independence the Scottish currency will be available in digital form, just as the Euro was available long before physical notes and coins were issued, with physical currency issued as soon as possible after this.

We must also improve the language of any plan for Scotland to delete references to the "debt" owed to London, when over the years that figures have been available, Scotland is owed billions rather than the other way around. Meek acceptance of the subsidiary status of Scotland, along with pejorative, misleading references to Scotland as "small" have no place in a positive plan for Scotland.

The focus on the report has done us all a favour by revealing how ingrained extremist neoliberal thinking is in many in Scotland. Armed with this knowledge we can reframe the debate to move to a more realistic, more inspirational plan. It is possible, after all that is what Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez are doing in the USA. Another Scotland is possible, change this resolution to ensure that we have the opportunity.

Accessibility
icon blindness



ONE OF the things I missed most when I lost my sight was the ability to read books. I've always been an avid reader, so I had to find alternative ways to read.

In the past, just about the only way a blind person could read was to use Braille. However, it is worth mentioning that fewer than 10% of blind people can read Braille, and I'm not one of them. I tried. I failed. It's not easy.

Fortunately, there are alternatives out there and, even better, most of them are available via mainstream sources. There are still specialised reading devices out there, and I'll mention a couple shortly, but audiobooks are now widely available from a number of sources. Audible, iTunes, Spotify and Kobo are just some of the providers who can send audiobooks to your preferred download device. This is not only good news for visually impaired readers, it helps people who like to hear a story while on the move or who live with some other reading difficulty.

The big problem with audiobooks is that only around 1 in 10 books are produced in audio format. This is because creating a Talking Book is a time-consuming and expensive operation. There is, however, an alternative thanks to the proliferation of smart devices with built in speech functions.

Perhaps the best known of these is the Kindle Store. Books downloaded to an Amazon Fire tablet can be read using the tablet's built-in screen reader. If you have some other tablet or

smartphone, it will also have a screen reader which should be able to read books downloaded via the Kindle app. You can also get your Amazon Echo to read a book from your Kindle library. Some people find these voices a bit robotic, but I take the view that I'd rather listen to an artificial voice than not read at all. The big advantage of Kindle books is that they are usually a fair bit cheaper to buy than standard audiobooks.

Your local library will also have a supply of audiobooks in formats ranging from tape cassette to portable MP3 player.

The great thing about all these ways of reading is that they are available in the mainstream, so anyone can use them.

There are still some specialised reading gadgets available for people with a visual impairment, but they are mostly very expensive. However, the RNIB library can also provide books in a range of formats including Braille, large print and audio. My choice is to download digital copies to my iPhone. Until very recently, I used the Overdrive app for this, but it must be said that this app, because it was not designed for use by visually impaired people, is a bit of a nightmare to navigate. Setting up the app also needs sighted assistance unless you are extremely tech savvy. Once you get the hang of it, it works well enough, but there has recently been a major development because Dolphin Computers have produced a free app called Easy Reader which is fully accessible and allows you to sign in to the RNIB Overdrive library. This app is so good, I'll be using it from now on.

But not every visually impaired person feels confident using smartphones, so RNIB have recently introduced a device called "RNIB In Your Pocket", which gives access to the Talking Book library as well as a few other functions such as access to online newspapers. I haven't tried *In Your Pocket* myself, but I hear very good reports of it.

Smart devices greatly increase the number of books available, but there are still some books which can only be read in paper format.

There is, however, a new device which can help with this. It's called Orcam, and is without doubt the best portable text reader I've come across. Orcam is a small device, about

Smart devices greatly increase the number of books available, but there are still some books which can only be read in paper format

Talking Tech



the size of your little finger, which clips onto the frame of a pair of spectacles. It photographs a page of text and begins reading it almost immediately. As usual with camera devices, good lighting helps get the best results, but I must say I am very impressed with Orcam. I had a shot of one and used it to read some articles from the last edition of iScot magazine and it rarely stumbled. It can struggle a bit if the text is in a fancy script, but when it comes to reading plain text such as in a book or newspaper, Orcam is superb.

Orcam My Eye also has a facial recognition function, can read product bar codes, and can connect to a Bluetooth earpiece so you can listen to a book without annoying anyone. It really is a very clever piece of kit.

For me, Orcam has only two drawbacks. One is the battery life which isn't all that long if you are using it continuously to read a book. That's why it's important to have a portable power bank with you to keep it charged.

The second issue is, as always with specialised technology, the price. The basic Orcam My Reader comes in at £2,500, while the My eye, with all the features, is £3,500. That's an awful lot of money for anyone to find. There is a 12 month interest-free finance option available, so your PIP money may help cover some or all of the cost, but there's

no denying it's a huge commitment which is beyond the reach of most visually impaired people. But as far as non-mainstream solutions to reading go, Orcam is top of the list in my opinion. I just need a lottery win to help pay for it.

So there are quite a few choices available these days, allowing people with visual impairments to enjoy reading books despite not being able to see the written word.

And, for the benefit of any pedants out there, most visually impaired people still call it reading even if they are having the book read to them. The only difference is that we use an intermediary to get the words from the page into our heads. Thanks to modern technology, it is something we can enjoy just like everyone else.

Right, I'm off to read a book. See you next month.

Orcam is top of the list in my opinion. I just need a lottery win to help pay for it



Ace



Weekends

NOW, SADLY, we dinna get to scoot here, there and everywhere aw the time, much as I'd like to do so, and we have to stay at home and do what I consider tae be, mundane and boring human things.

However, Dad says oor Saturdays and Sundays 'at home' may be just a wee tad different tae maist folks, so join us on a few of our recent Ace weekends.

Uncle Matt had just returned from his months honeymoon in Sri Lanka.

Dad was well chuffed as he brought back some pics from when Dad was there, as he flew out to do relief aid a week or so after the tsunami and spent all his tennis ball money on a school and clinic in a place called Telwatta where a train was washed off the tracks...

Dad doesn't talk about it much, but he stayed a year doing his buildings, and suffice to say, they are still there, operating, and indeed thriving.

Anyway, at last, the snaws came, but snaw canna stop us, and on his first weekend back, Uncle Matt had ordered loads and loads of timber to clad out the tool container on site, start building the clubhouse, make a better porch for us and erect a shelter for the archery target area.

Mind you, the weather was a pain in the butt as Dad had

tae keep climbing on the roof to clear the snow off the 'solar panels' so we had juice for the modem and laptops, and like last year, once again, we were breaking up ice in the burn so we could get the water pump to work, but such are the joys of off-grid living I guess.

The first weekend was great mind you, as twixt work, we had a bunch of wee lasses come to have a birthday party and do some axe and ninja star throwing, and that went down well, although somehow Laoch proved far too fast a moving target for them.

Ah well.....maybe next time they'll get him.

We like doing the 'meeting and greeting' stuff, and usually send folk off with a performance of The Blaze Show, where I do my tricks....whilst Laoch runs around like a daft jist barking nipping at my tail as he canna dae any party pieces.

*Such are the joys
of off-grid living I
guess*



Also, it was a good chance for us to catch up with Buster, the Ace Target dog as we'd not seen him for a month and we'd missed him...well, Laoch did mostly.

There's a 'bromance' thing going on between them....

I dinna have a problem wi' that... but see when they dae the licking

There's a 'bromance' thing going on between them....

each others tongues thing.... Arghhhh....

Dad had even splashed out and ordered a wee twin tub washing machine to go into the new porch to do my towels and things, but whilst it's fine for that, believe me, the big furry dog blankets are jist a bit too much for such a small machine, so it's still trips to the big launderette washers for those.

Seems we canna have a normal automatic washing machine as we dinna have enough water pressure.

Me and Laoch are fine with the laundry task in town though, as we get to go to the beach whilst the launderette machine is 'doing it's thing' and can come home, nice and wet, riddled wi' sand and seaweed....and jump up on the nice clean dog blankets....hurrah!!

Another chore we had to get done, which had been getting put off for ages was to also re-roof our wee porch area and fit a door to it.

This was never really a problem before...but then, we never





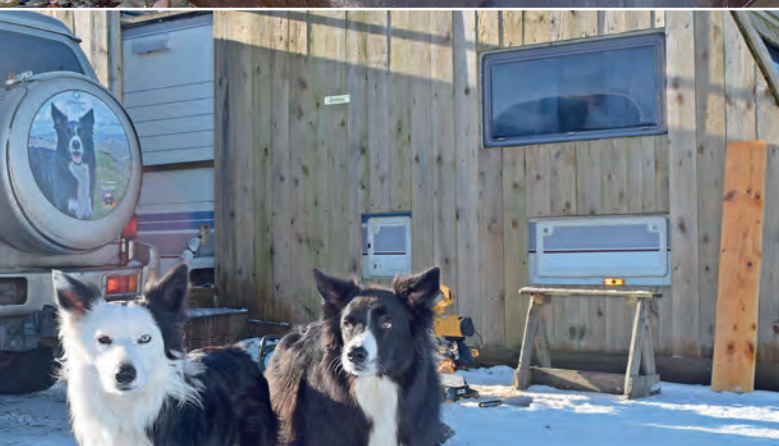
usually get Northerly gales here.....until a few weeks ago.

All the batteries and controllers for the solar panels got drookit and poor Dad was oot in the middle of the night, in the teeth of the storm bravely attempting tae get everything covered up with tarpaulins.

Even Laoch felt a wee bit sorry for the auld soul.... (just an awfy wee bit mind you).

Luckily, free roofing was available due to the Co-op in





Broadford being re-clad, so Uncle Matt had managed to aquire a whole pile of the auld stuff which was still good in our opinion, and we used that jist fine.

Mind you, tae make matters worse with regards to getting things wet.....Mouse, oor scabby stray cat had decided the weather was too bad to venture oot in, and therefore decided that having a pee on the couch and a poo in Dad's slipper was infinitely preferable to braving the teeth of the storm.





How Dad chuckled when he discovered...firstly the squishy slipper and then the sodden cushion

My goodness....how Dad chuckled when he discovered...firstly the squishy slipper and then the sodden cushion.

Lets jist say there was a distinct lack of feline 'dreamies treats' forthcoming for a few days.

We eventually, got that porch job done and dusted....and a door fitted, and Dad was so happy, he decided to attempt something new for us....cooking a chook using only the wood burner.

It involves jist putting a whacking big pot over the whole chicken that's sat on top of the stove tae make an oven, and who would believe it....it worked, so we all got spoiled that weekend and beyond with chicken and soup for the best part of a week...

We need to attempt it again with the bread making though, as last time was a puir embarrassment.

By the next weekend, all the snaw had gone and we actually got a bonny clear





Clubhouse



Meet and Greet

day, so we were able to go for a wee daunder, and where better than the 'secret beach'.

Once again, we had it all to ourselves and spent all day there just doing ball chasings as Dad had packed the big flask full of coffee and lots of dinners for him, and of course, wheans o' treats for me and Laoch.

Sadly, we never saw the eagle this time mind you, but it was just a most perfect day.

We also needed to attempt one last big task, which was to relocate oor wind turbine as it wasn't quite high enough, so that had to go up the hill a wee bit and a much taller post fitted so it could catch the best of the wind, so we decided to tackle the turbine this weekend jist past, something Dad wasn't looking forward to as if it

If it all went wrong, we'd be a few tennis ball tokens down wi' a mangled mess of a windmill



Wind turbine

all went wrong, we'd be a few tennis ball tokens down wi' a mangled mess of a windmill.

We had managed tae blag a huge length o' scaffold pole, so Dad asked, (begged), Uncle Matt into strapping it on the roof of his van, and we slowly...very slowly, managed to get it home without jousting some poor unsuspecting pedestrian or cyclist.

This new pole got clamped onto the freshly clad tool container, then in the midst of a downpour, Dad and Uncle Matt somehow managed to raise the second section of pole up and above the other length. I supervised naturally.

Dad had already dug a wee trench, with help from Laoch...



Water turbine



who dug in all the wrong places...(but at least he tried)....and had run the power cable to the new location.

It was then wired up, and just in time I may add as an hour later, we got pelted by an incoming storm.

On the plus side, the turbine immediately started producing power, so it all worked out jist bonny.

Right...Laoch is pestering me and wanting 'turn-about' at writing the articles, so I think it's only fair I should encourage him as it may keep him oot o' trouble.

What do you think?

Until next time,

Blaze, Laoch and the scabby cat..... xx



The turbine immediately started producing power, so it all worked out jist bonny



SPIRIT OF THE AGE



by Dr Jamie Reid-Baxter

Scottish historian, cultural activist and former European Parliament translator

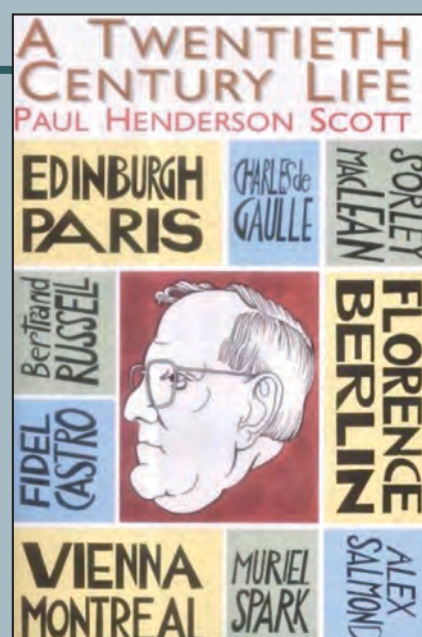
Paul H. Scott (1920-2019)

IN 2005, THE Saltire Society published a volume entitled *Spirits of the Age: Scottish Self-Portraits*, comprising thirty short autobiographical sketches by individuals born between 1900 (George Elder Davie) and 1961 (Jackie Kay). *Spirits of the Age* was the brainchild of its editor, Paul Henderson Scott, a tirelessly energetic eighty-five year old veteran of the fight for Scottish cultural and political self-respect. Alas, Scott could not very well have included himself in his edited collection of mini-autobiographies. But if any child of Caledonia has been a 'spirit of the age' in the past hundred years, it was Paul H. Scott, who died on 17 March 2019. Fortunately for posterity, Scott had in fact written an autobiography in 2002, *A Twentieth Century Life*. Incredibly, his health was such that he went on to have a most productive 21st Century life as well (he was still going abroad on ski-ing holidays in his eighties).

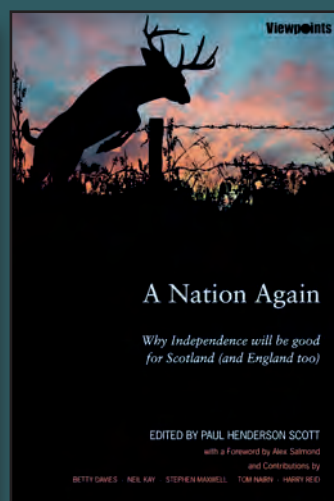
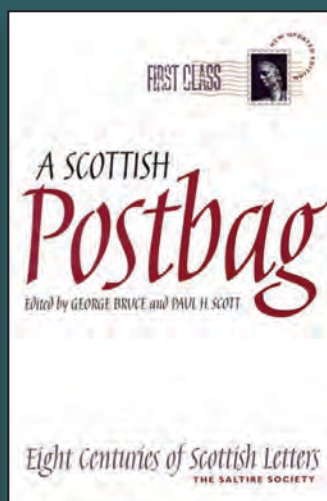
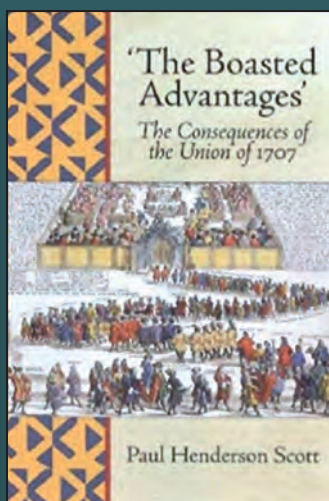
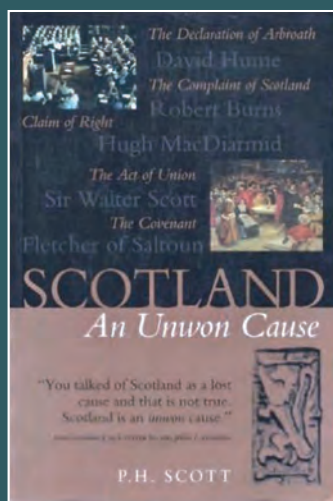
A native of Edinburgh, a pupil at the town's Royal High School and a graduate of its university, he celebrated his birthplace and his love for it in many places, not least his two-part essay, 'Scotland's Precipitous Capital', re-published online in *Edinburgh Review* as recently as 1 August 2018. Its first half was written in 1980 when Scott retired from the Diplomatic Service and returned home for good, and its second half in 1995. In 2000, he celebrated his hometown in a short Scots-language poem that mentions several of its historic bairns – the poets William Dunbar, Robert Ferguson, Robert Garioch and Sidney Goodsir Smith, the philosopher David Hume and the physicist James Clerk Maxwell. That poem can be found on another page of this issue.

After his wartime service, Paul Scott found himself in Berlin throughout the Soviet blockade 1948-49. He joined the Diplomatic Service in 1950, and he was in Cuba during the Missile Crisis of 1962. During the three decades of his diplomatic career, his passionate love of his country and his ongoing exploration of its cultural riches never ceased to deepen. Scott had been life-changingly inspired by his discovery of the Saltire Society when he was a 19 year old student waiting for his call-up papers in 1939 - when the Saltire Society was only three years old. Well before his return to Edinburgh in 1980, Scott was actively involved in the work of the Saltire Society. The Society had been contributing a great deal to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe since 1947. But only to the Fringe. One of Scott's greatest achievements was to inspire Frank Dunlop, the splendidly open-minded Edinburgh Festival Director 1984-1991, to incorporate the

Scott had been life-changingly inspired by his discovery of the Saltire Society when he was a 19 year old student waiting for his call-up papers in 1939



Saltire Society's programme of events in five successive *official* Festivals. Those five years saw Scotland receive incomparably more Festival coverage than in all the preceding decades taken together (or since). To single out just one of the many, many groundbreaking Saltire contributions to the Festival during Frank Dunlop's time, thanks to Paul Scott: the string of presentations, between 1987 and 1991, of the superb sacred polyphony of Robert Carver (c.1487-1568), canon of the Abbey of Scone, as full-scale 'liturgical reconstructions' of high mass as it would have been sung for James IV and James V by the Chapel Royal of Scotland. Those concerts attracted very large Scottish and international audiences, who discovered a Scotland entirely unknown to them. It's worth googling 'My Saltire Life Paul Henderson Scott' and reading the stimulating speech the man gave in 2013 to mark the Saltire Society's 80th birthday.



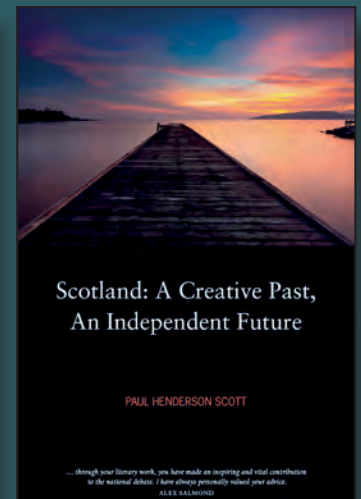
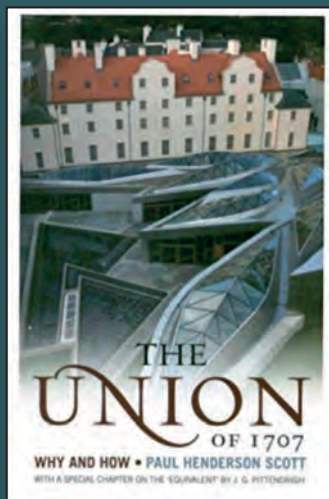
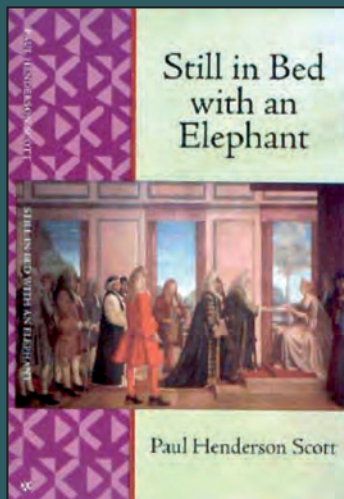
Scott made all sorts of events happen, including symposia on all sorts of subjects, but a constant throughout his life was his single-minded advocacy of a Scottish National Theatre. Key to his belief in the transformative importance of theatre was the fact that Scott had attended - and witnessed the incredible impact of - the 1947 Edinburgh Festival production of Sir David Lyndsay's wondrous play *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis*,

This staggering recreation of the original 1550s production was filmed for posterity, and can be seen free, online

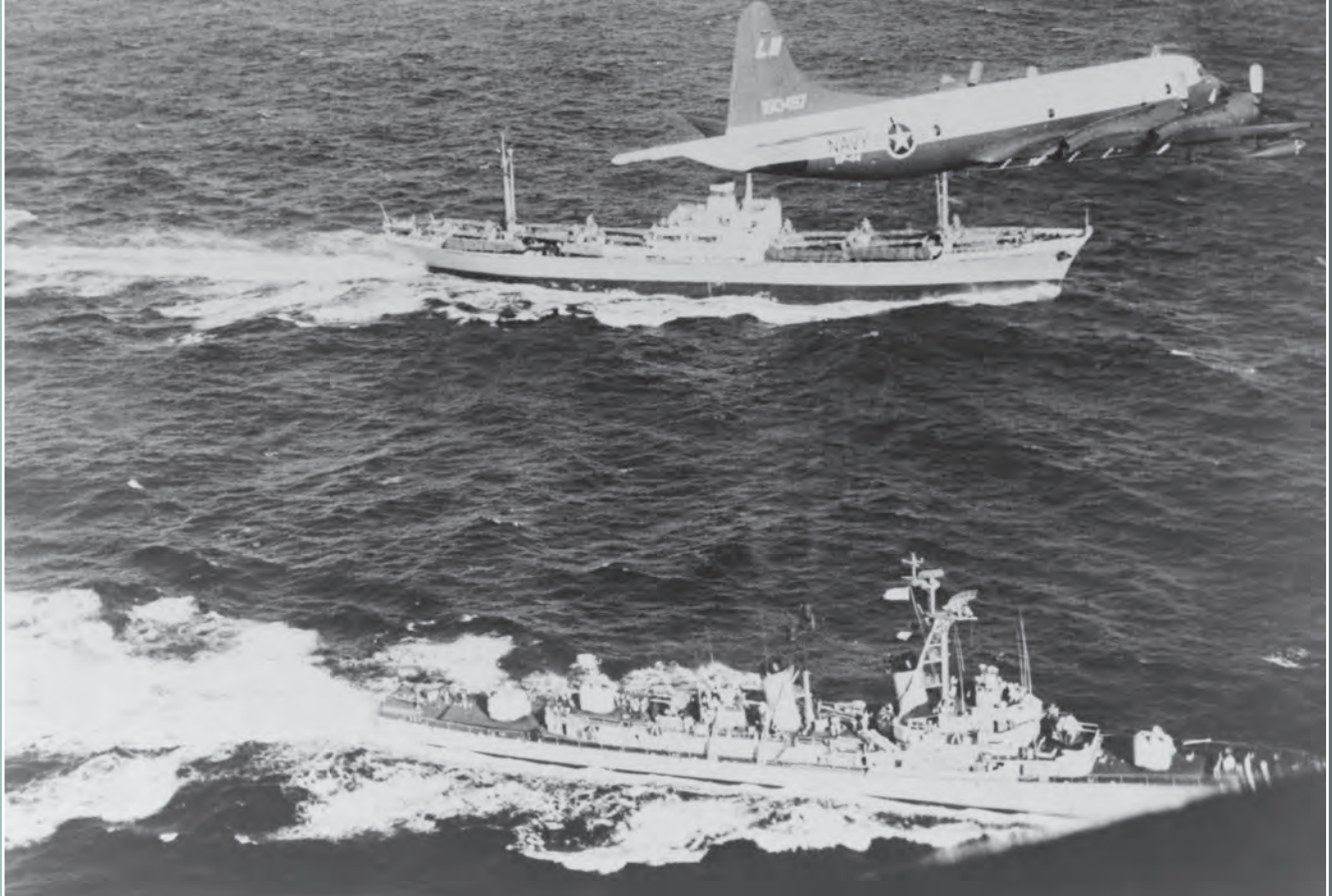
in commendatioun of vertew and vituperatioun of vyce, written in the early 1550s. The production used a cut-down (and somewhat bowdlerised) text, which was revived in 1973 and 1985 to equally great international acclaim. In his April 2013 account of his 'Saltire Life', Scott deplored the fact that there had been no Festival production since 1985. But only weeks after Scott gave his Saltire address, there was a series of performances - the first since the 1550s - of the entire text, uncut and unbawdlerised. They took place in the open air at Linlithgow. Even more importantly, this staggering recreation of the original 1550s production was filmed for posterity, and can be seen free, online, by googling



A scene from the June 2013 production of *The Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis*. Photo © Staging the Scottish Court



Soviet freighter ANESOV, escorted by a United States Navy plane and the destroyer, USS BARRY, as it leaves Cuba loaded with missiles signaling the end of Cuban Missile Crisis. October 1962. Paul Scott's telegram anent Russian disarming of the warheads may have saved the world from nuclear annihilation

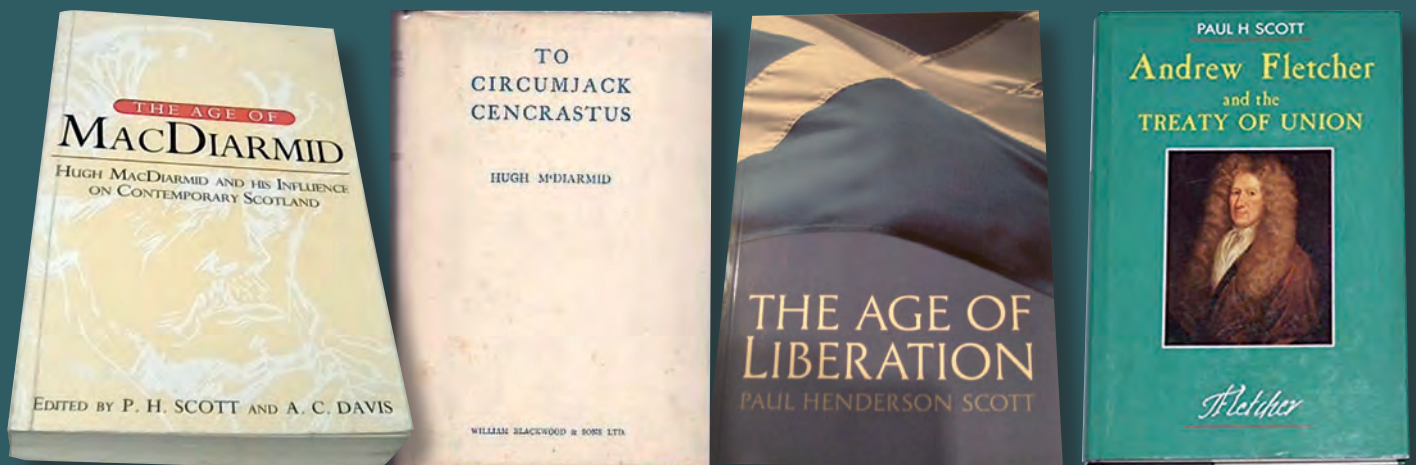


<http://stagingthescottishcourt.brunel.ac.uk/>. It does no credit whatever to the Edinburgh International Festival that it has failed to follow up that initiative of Paul Scott's *alma mater*, Edinburgh University. But Lyndsay's masterpiece is now available to all, complete.

Paul Scott was already writing long before his retirement and return to Edinburgh in 1980. But from then on, his literary productivity - over nearly four decades - was awe-inspiring. And all that research and writing was being done

His literary productivity - over nearly four decades - was awe-inspiring

in tandem with all the other work he was doing and all the meetings he was attending and chairing - whether as Rector of Dundee University, or with Scottish PEN, the Saltire Society, or the SNP. He would in the course of time hold the presidency of Scottish PEN, and of the Saltire Society, while in the SNP, at different times he was



Vice-President and Spokesman on Cultural Affairs. His many, many books, short and long, include both numerous monographs and equally numerous edited, multi-author collections of essays. Between them, Scott's books cover a huge range of Scottish subjects, always viewed through a lens that is entirely nationalist *and* entirely internationalist. What else would his lens be? As Hugh MacDiarmid said in *To Circumjack Cencrastus* (1930): 'If there is ocht in Scotland that's warth ha'en / There is nae distance to which it's unattached'. Taken together, these books constitute a positive cornucopia, bursting with ideas, critiques and criticisms, suggestions and yes, demands.

All the books bearing P.H.Scott's name are worth chasing up. Of course, nobody will agree with everything that is to be found between their covers. But it would be a strange reader who did not enjoy having their own views challenged by such well-written, sinewy, argumentative prose. Here again, the internet can supply excellent lists of Scott's own writings and his edited collections of essays both political and literary. Amongst the latter, outstandingly readable are *The Age of MacDiarmid* (1980), which he co-edited with his Saltire Society colleague Bert Davis, and *A Scottish Postbag: Eight Centuries of Scottish Letters* (1986), co-edited with another friend, the great poet George Bruce (1909-2002). Scott's own monographs include *Walter Scott and Scotland* (1981), *Andrew Fletcher and the Treaty of Union* (1994), *The Boasted Advantages: the consequences of the Union of 1707* (1999), *Towards Independence* (2001), *The Union of 1707: Why and How* (2006), *The New Scotland: a 21st Century Sequel* (2008), and *Scotland: a creative past, an independent future* (2014).

It would be a strange reader who did not enjoy having their own views challenged by such well-written, sinewy, argumentative prose



Paul Scott knew how to articulate his unshakeable principles with courtesy and human warmth; he and his Italian partner, Laura Fiorentini, were always a joy to encounter (and one did generally encounter them together – it was a true, mutually enriching partnership). Scotland needs people like them, prepared to use their gifts for the common good. Scotland needs that kind of dauntless optimism, utter rejection of the foul 'Caledonian Cringe', and a capacity for passionate, serious hard work grounded on absolute self-respect, fired by an informed internationalism and an equally informed grasp of the full range of Scotland's culture, history and politics. Fate granted Paul Scott nearly forty years of productive 'retirement' to use his gifts to the full. We can only hope that his passing will be an incentive to all who care about humanity – let alone Scotland – to (re) discover his written contribution to the cause of human dignity and self-worth, and to draw inspiration from the way that this man used his ten decades on earth.

An iScot Short Story

THE RISE & RISE OF Carlotta Morazov



RAYMOND Cramble was a journalist. After his degree course at the University of Mid-Scotland he'd got a job with the *Wick Advertiser*. After a couple of years he moved to the *Fifeman*. It was somebody there who told him to get out of newspapers: "Most people get their news on TV or the internet. They only buy papers for the puzzles or the celebrity gossip. That's why the papers don't bother with news any more. What there is, they just copy from elsewhere or make up. Special interest mags is the way forward." So Raymond became deputy editor of the monthly *World of Rodents*. He learned a great deal about furry creatures large and small, so much so that four years later he was easily the prime candidate for the editorship of *Pest Exterminator*. Now he was at the top of the tree, but it wasn't enough. He knew he could write, and he needed money. A comfortable flat by the Dundee waterfront just wasn't enough.

He decided to write novels. Visits to bookshops and his local library told him soon enough that crime fiction was what sold. He read enough to get a feel for what seemed to be successful, and then developed his formula. There must be a detective who is dedicated, brutal, flawed and successful, though disliked by his superiors. He must work with a partner who is a complete contrast to him. The cases he deals with must involve frequent killings of a most gruesome type. And only because of his prescient gut feelings, his imaginative leaps, and his dogged persistence after all his colleagues have given up, are the cases solved after his tense final confrontation with the killer. And so Judd Moloch was born.



Breaking limbs was an easy matter for a big man with a baseball bat

Inspector Judd Moloch. He'd been a soldier, a junior officer in Afghanistan. Succeeded where others failed because of his willingness to take any measures necessary to succeed. He could when he wanted be brutally destructive: breaking limbs was an easy matter for a big man with a baseball bat. But torture which left no mark was also his metier: with a simple darning needle he could inflict so much pain that a confession was inevitable. Indeed, his confession rate among suspected insurgents was second to none. And he enjoyed being judge, jury and, especially, executioner. The senior officers, in public, disapproved of his methods, but could not argue against their effectiveness. And when a young colonel, vaguely related to the royal family, slapped him on the back, remarking, "That's the spirit, old chap, got to show them who's the boss, eh?" he knew he was untouchable. Of course, they say pride always comes before a fall, and after his trial and summary execution of the mayor and council of a small town in Helmand province, his presence was felt to be embarrassing. He was persuaded to resign, with the promise that, "Don't worry, old chap, you'll see, something will pop up." And indeed, no sooner was he back in the UK than he was offered a job in the Metropolitan Police.

There was no point in writing about Moloch as a lowly PC, so he had him fast-tracked, due to his army background, to detective sergeant. Then, after a particularly difficult case in which a suspected rapist phoned the police to confess after both his kneecaps had been smashed by a man in a balaclava wielding an iron bar, Moloch was transferred to Police Scotland and promoted to Detective Inspector. Raymond recognised that putting his hero in places familiar to his readers would sell more books. Planting his cop in Fiji or Tangier would involve a lot of research that would get in the way of the writing.

This is where the first book would start. Moloch is sent to prove himself to a small town on the edge of the central belt, a depressed place with high unemployment and plenty of crime. He finds most of it is connected to a local gangster, Tam Straienshaw. By cleverly planting rumours, Moloch sets off a war amongst Straienshaw's chief henchmen, so that sections of the gang start fighting each other. Raymond got that idea from Dashiell Hammett's *Red Harvest*. When the gang is thus weakened, Moloch then picks off the weaker members, forcing confessions which incriminate those higher up, and eliminating those who won't co-operate. The gangster's corrupt lawyer causes a lot of trouble for Moloch, until he is mysteriously drowned in a sewer. After that, Straienshaw's ability to defy Moloch is significantly weakened, and the inspector sets up a confrontation, at the end of which the gangster pulls out what could be a weapon, and is gunned down by police marksmen. Moloch ensures that a suitable weapon is found in his hand. He then intimidates the remaining gang members until they flee to safer places. The town has been cleaned up, and even if Moloch seems to overdo it at times, law and order has triumphed, and his colleagues stand and applaud as he comes into the divisional HQ to request another assignment.

One problem that emerged as he wrote was that of the sidekick. Raymond found it hard to develop a Detective Sergeant who would be a strong contrast to Moloch. The DI despises anyone who isn't able to stand up to him, and ignores anyone who is. He just doesn't do sharing. However, he doesn't consider women or disabled people to be equals, so the sidekick became wheelchair-bound DS Leela Omala, crippled as a result of Moloch's careless driving whilst chasing a stolen car. She's a IT whizz with a sharp brain and a good imagination, and enough bitterness

THE RISE & RISE OF Carlotta Morazov



to vent her spleen on Moloch every time she encounters him. In each book Raymond thought she might attempt in a different way to destroy Moloch: in the first book a voodoo curse, in the second, poisoning his coffee, in the third, tipping off his movements to criminals, and so on. Each attempt is of course unsuccessful, but leaves its mark on Moloch, who would become more disturbed and violent as the series developed.

He showed the first draft of *Moloch's Order* to a number of contacts he knew in the publishing world, and soon an ambitious young agent, Salomé O'Brien, took him on. She had a good look at the book and recommended a rewrite, increasing the level of explicit violence, and adding some gratuitous sex. Raymond duly obliged, and a scene where Moloch seduces the gangster's daughter, then beats her up as a warning to him was particularly appreciated. However, Salomé felt that his name would not help him. Raymond Cramble just didn't have the sense of menace which should be appropriate to writer of gritty crime fiction. Plus he was male. The most successful crime writers, she believed, were female, and she therefore recommended a female *nom de plume*. Thus was born Carlotta Morazov. Raymond agreed

Moloch seduces the gangster's daughter, then beats her up as a warning to him

that he wouldn't reveal to anyone that he was Carlotta Morazov, at least until they saw how the book was doing.

It was published by Locust Books, a small publisher of crime novels, and was an instant success. Moloch's moral ambiguity attracted the critics, who were able to pontificate about law, order, justice, and human values till the cows came home. The reading public were attracted more by the sex, violence, and ultimate triumph of the good guys. Most readers agreed that the end justified the means. O'Brien Associates now rejected Locust's offer to publish the next Moloch, and secured Raymond a four-book deal with a ZOD, a major international publisher, who handed Raymond a £50,000 advance. Now he could bid farewell to *Pest Exterminator*, and be his own man.



He'd already written the second Moloch book, in which the inspector cleans up a gang of people smugglers supplying slave labour to the fruit farms of south Angus. His new editor, Cara Smythe-Tomkins, however, soon curtly informed him that it was totally unsatisfactory. "Let's face it, Ray," she said during their Skype conference, "Any local writer could churn out this sort of stuff. Locust might drool at it, but we're not so easily impressed. Even their cover's pathetic. We hired you because you can write, and because Moloch's a great character, not for this. Nobody's interested in people smugglers, or the fruit industry, or places they've not heard of. Or anything so small-scale. You need to think bigger, Ray. What people want now is something that'll give them a bit of a shiver. Think serial killer, the more crazed the better. Think weird violence. Evisceration. Splayed out guts. And something personal to Moloch. Give him a loved one, then kill her off. Get on it, Ray. Earn your keep!"

The result was *Moloch's Watch*, in which Moloch, now based in Manchester, hunts down a serial killer who removes his victims' eyes and mails them to their nearest and dearest. His final victim is Moloch's wife, an attractive nurse whom he has recently married. Moloch's revenge when he finally confronts the killer is a relentless destruction with a club hammer of the man's limbs, one bone-crushing blow for each victim. The final blow, for Moloch's wife, is however not the end, and the final

Many readers admitted to having vomited whilst reading the final chapter

sequence in which the man is disembowelled, following which Moloch tears his heart out with his bare hands, occupied eight pages.

This one was a best-seller throughout the English-speaking world, especially in the USA, and was then translated into all the major world languages. Many readers admitted to having vomited whilst reading the final chapter. Raymond netted another £50,000 and plenty more. Carlotta Morazov had arrived.

However, her fame brought problems. One was an avalanche of letters, emails, tweets, and communications by every possible means, directed to Carlotta via her publishers. There were many offers of marriage, or simply sex, along with a smaller number of complaints about the unnecessary violence in her novels. And even a couple of messages from men who claimed to have emulated Moloch's violent activities. Police found most of these claims to be false, but one claimant, who turned out to be a Detroit police officer, was arrested.

The other problem was the many demands for information about Carlotta herself, and requests for her to appear at book festivals throughout the world. *Moloch's Watch* was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize, although in the end the award went to Naomi van Schöörach's *My World is Air and Smells of Lemon*. Cara Smythe-Tomkins had been at the ceremony, ready to accept the prize on Carlotta's behalf. The next week she summoned Raymond to a meeting at the publisher's headquarters in London.

He was shown into a high-speed lift on the ground floor of a skyscraper, and came out into an office on the top floor. Cara was waiting, and he was surprised to see Salomé there too. Cara was wearing a grey suit with a short skirt, and Raymond let his eyes caress her thighs as he lowered himself into the deep armchair and sat facing her. She brushed a lock of long auburn hair away from her face.

"Raymond," she said quietly, "Carlotta has arrived. We need to decide what to do with her. Salomé and I have just been having a chat about it, and we're both happy about the way it's going to work out."

"I'm ready too," said Raymond. "I realise, now that the books are so successful, that I'll have to reveal that I'm Carlotta. We could make a big event of it. Disclose my identity right at the end. Or ..."

"No, Raymond," whispered Cara, leaning provocatively towards him, "It's not going to be like that."

"Ah, you've already got the revelation event worked out?"

"There isn't going to be a revelation."

"I – I don't understand. People want to see Carlotta Morazov in person."

"And so they will, Raymond. It just won't be you."

"But I'm Carlotta Morazov."

"No, Raymond," put in Salomé, "Remember, Carlotta is an author I invented for you. And I've done a deal with ZOD. On your behalf, of course. It's a good one, a very good one."

"And," Cara continued, "We own her now, not you. In fact, we've already hired a B-list actress based in South Africa who'll play the part of Carlotta Morazov. She's a clever girl, and can carry it off well enough. We'll provide her with a good back story, and write her speeches."

"Speeches?"

"Yes. The next Moloch book will win a couple of major prizes – we've already set that up."

"But how can you do that? There's competition."

"One of them we sponsor, so we appoint the judges; we simply put in people who do what we tell them. The other was a bit trickier – but the money always gets through in the end."

"But you still need me to write the books."

She laid her hand on his right knee and squeezed it.

"Actually, Raymond, we don't. You think you're the only guy who can write this sort of shit? We've already lined up a couple of people who'll write the stuff if necessary."

"What do you mean? This is ridiculous. I've got a contract to write three more books for you."

"Of course you have, darling. Just write them, and send them in on time. If they're not good enough, or the plot doesn't fit, our guys can work on them."

"What do you mean, if the plot doesn't fit. I'm the author."

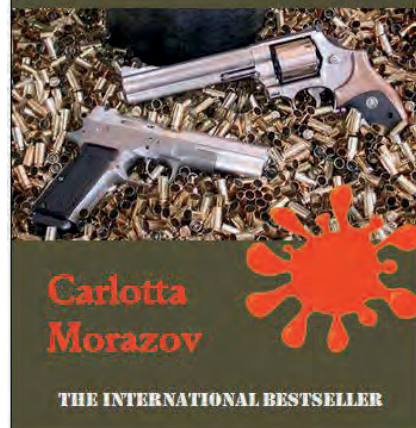
"Poor Raymond. You really don't understand. Moloch isn't just a character from fiction. He's a brand, a product. Our concept designers and promotional engineers have developed a product definition that will maximise our profits from Moloch. Believe me, Raymond, Moloch will just get nastier and nastier. And bigger and bigger. After the books, there will be the films. And the 3D immersion games. And the products. We've already got a deal with a cutlery manufacturer in South Korea for a Moloch knife range. So you see how important it is that we get the books right, don't you?"

"You can't do this to me!" gasped Raymond, "I created Judd Moloch. He's mine, and I'll keep him. Believe me, you haven't heard the end of this." He attempted to jump up from the chair to emphasise the point, but it was so deep and soft that he only got half way up before sinking back into it.

Cara came over to him, perched herself on the arm of his chair, allowing her skirt to ride even further up her

His angry outburst had been useful, netted him a bigger advance

Moloch's Watch



thigh, and stroked his cheek with her fingers. "Of course you created him, darling. We're not pushing you out, Ray, of course not. We're just making the most of your creation. In fact, we're so confident in what you're giving us that we'll give you an advance of £100,000 on the next book. *Moloch's Anger* would be a good title. Nice and evocative. It needs to be good. Remember that it's going to win prizes, so throw in a few longer words."

Her words, and especially the money, mollified Raymond, and he left the meeting smiling to himself. His angry outburst had been useful, netted him a bigger advance. Now he'd be closer to the centre of their plans. No-one would take Judd Moloch from him.

Later that afternoon, Cara made a phone call. Two weeks later an obscure journalist, until recently the editor of *Pest Exterminator*, was involved in a road accident. It happened at night, on a country road near Brechin on a tight corner, wet with recent rain. His brakes must have failed, as the car skidded off the road, hit a tree, burst into flames. There were no witnesses, and no survivors.

No-one remembered Raymond Cramble. Only a couple of neighbours turned up for his funeral at the local crematorium. Later that week, at a major event at the Frankfurt Book Fair, Carlotta Morazov appeared in public for the very first time. Her agent, Salomé O'Brien, and her publisher, Cara Smythe-Tomkins, received plaudits from the publishing industry for their discovery and nurturing of such a fantastic talent.

Wee Ginger

We Brexit - We

by Paul Kavanagh

THERE is little certainty left in what passes for statecraft in this so-called United Kingdom. There is certainty, but none of it is stately, none of it is craft. There's the certainty that the British political establishment act only in their own short term interests. There's the certainty that British politicians put the needs of their own careers first, followed by the needs of their party, and only a long way behind comes the needs of the country. But most of all, there is the certainty that what Scotland needs and wants doesn't even register in their calculations.

In a few weeks time, Scotland faces being taken out of the EU against its will. This is despite the repeated claims from opponents of independence in 2014 that the only way in

British politicians put the needs of their own careers first, followed by the needs of their party, and only a long way behind comes the needs of the country



which Scotland could retain its EU membership was by voting to remain a part of the UK. We're constantly told that the EU vote was a UK-wide vote, that the UK voted as a whole and will leave as a whole. But that ignores the fact that Scotland is only a part of that UK in the first place because the very same people who are now taking us out of the EU told Scotland's voters to vote against independence in order to remain a part of the EU. And now those same people ignore, marginalise, and sideline Scotland's interests in the desperate fantasising that passes for the UK's Brexit negotiations.

In the months and years since the EU referendum, supporters of Brexit have been engaged in an exercise in rewriting history, an exercise in which much of the British media has collaborated. We are told that the vote to leave the EU was a vote to leave the customs union and the single market, even though during the EU referendum debate the suggestion was made that the UK could remain in both. What was termed a soft Brexit early in 2016 has now been rewritten as no Brexit at all, as Brexit in name only. What was once called a hard Brexit is now presented as a soft Brexit. And the constitutional, political, and economic vandalism of crashing out with no deal at all is now presented as a hard Brexit.

It's not just the terms of Brexit that have been retrospectively rewritten to suit the victors. In Scotland we are now informed that Scotland always knew that an EU referendum was in the offing, and that when Scotland voted against independence in 2014 it was in the full knowledge that this might mean leaving the EU. We're told to suck it up. We're told to accept the result. We're told that this is democracy.

That's a lie, a barefaced, cynical, self-serving lie. Democracy means nothing if those who win popular votes are not held to account on their delivery of the promises they made in order to win. Some of us were paying attention in 2014. There was little mention of an EU referendum, and no one in the Better Together campaign ever suggested that Scotland might be dragged out of the EU against its will if it voted to remain a part of the UK. Quite the contrary, they downplayed the risk.

Dug pay for it



During a TV debate, Ruth Davidson laughed off the idea that the Conservatives might achieve a majority at the next General Election and bring about an EU referendum. She made it clear that even she didn't think that was going to happen. And if it did, the consensus of opinion in Scotland was that the UK would vote to remain, and the EU vote was merely a sop to placate the frothier fringes of the Conservative party to help it see off Ukip in English constituencies. That was as much discussion as there was in 2014 about Scotland being taken out of the EU by the UK.

Supporters of the UK were exceedingly keen to assert that it was only Scottish independence that risked exclusion from the EU, and that became the received truth propagated by the BBC and the rest of the British media. Now they want it to become the received truth that Scotland always knew that staying in the UK meant leaving the EU.

Labour has always posed as the champion of Scotland within the UK. Jeremy Corbyn was elected as Labour leader on a promise to be different, to be the good guy. He was going to stand against those politicians who didn't listen, who didn't say what they believe. But he's turned out to be exactly the same. No political party is standing up for Scotland's interests within the UK, because it's clear now that the UK is a vehicle for the English nationalism that has driven Brexit.

We're told that Scotland is an equal and valued partner in a family of nations, yet we're ignored, traduced, and marginalised. Yet there is a nation within the British Isles which really is an equal and valued partner in a family of nations. There really is a nation in the British Isles which has partners who respect its interests, who listen to its concerns, who take those concerns and interests on board and who treat that nation as an equal partner with a seat at the top table. That nation is Ireland within the EU. That's the lesson of Brexit for Scotland.

Brexit is the defining issue of the age for the UK. Whether the British state leaves the EU at the end of

this month, or later, or even if by some political miracle the decision is reversed, Brexit will continue to dominate British politics for years to come. It's going to suck out all the energy and enthusiasm required to tackle other issues, like austerity, the widening inequality gap, climate change, and the hollowing out of British democracy. And all the while Scotland will look on from the sidelines, powerless to influence the course of events. That's the future that awaits Scotland if we remain a part of this dysfunctional Brexitia.

We're told that Scotland is an equal and valued partner in a family of nations, yet we're ignored, traduced, and marginalised

‘Reikie, 2000’

For Dunbar it was the mirry toun.
Fergusson cried it a canty hole
And like a keek o glore and heaven forby.
Here Hume transformed human thocht
And gave bien denners tae his freens.
Clerk Maxwell as a bairn at schule
Screivit a paper for the Royal Society.

For thae that hae the lugs tae hear,
Thae splores, high jinks, high thochts
Still echo roon closes, wynds,
Howfs an New Toun drawing rooms.
In oor ain time Garioch and Smith
Were gey sib to Fergusson himsell.
The sheer beauty o the place still lifts the hert,
A beauty which some hae done their best tae hash.

For there’s muckle to garr ye grue
In Auld Reikie and in aw Scotland thae days:
Puirith, ignorance and hopelessness,
Shoddy biggins, ill health, early daith,
Amang the warst in Europe, tae oor shame.
Cheek by jowl wi commercial greed,
Affluence, mobile phones and jaunts tae Bangkok,
Efter three hunner year o nae government, or
misgovernment.

But noo there’s a glisk o hope,
At last we hae oor Parliament back,
Reined yet by Westminster -
But sune we’ll ding thae traces doon.
Ower lang, oor calls for equality and social justice
Hae fallen on deif and distant lugs.
Sune we shall bigg a new and fairer Scotland,
Wi Reikie a real capital aince mair.

This poem prefaces *A Nation Again: Why Independence will be Good for Scotland (and England too)*, edited by Paul Scott (Luath Press, 2008, 2012).



Paul Henderson Scott (1920-2019)





MajorBloodnok, Agony Aunt

Heed my wisdom or I'll set the Prime Minister on you

Twitter: @MajorMcBloodnok

Dear Major,

There's a lot in the news about large organisations moving to Europe prior to Brexit day. Do you know who might be next? Incompetents_R_Us

Dear Mr Grayling,

There isn't a comprehensive list of organisations that have left or who are planning to leave the UK. This is mainly because the Government has been trying to keep a lid on who has actually gone and who wants to. Nevertheless, we do know that many international institutions and large banks have left London already, taking hundreds of billions in assets with them.

However, in a somewhat controversial move, reports are emerging that the UK Government is also intending to leave, by signing an emergency inter-governmental contract to relocate to Belgium.

The plan is that the Government will depart the UK just before Brexit hits the fan taking all available valuables with it, which means removing anything

Reports are emerging that the UK Government is also intending to leave, by signing an emergency inter-governmental contract to relocate to Belgium

not nailed down and setting fire to what's left. Moveable assets will include Scotland, though not the Scots obviously, who will be deported to Diego Garcia. And probably set on fire for good measure.

Nevertheless, as Joanna Cherry MP would have pointed out if she'd known about it, there is a huge fly in the mayonnaise because it seems this lucrative Belgian contract was not put to open tender due to 'unforeseen events'.

Consequently, because they're a bunch of self-serving incompetents who can't explain what those 'unforeseen events' actually are, the UK will inevitably be dragged through the courts by Bulgaria, the Netherlands and Ramsgate demanding (and getting) compensation because no-one gave them a chance to tender for it.

Dear Major,

What special level of hell do Brexiteers belong to?

It's_Tusk_At_The_Top

Dear Donald,

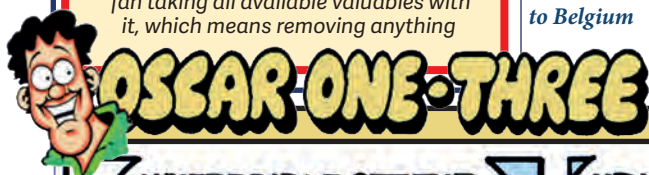
According to Dante there are nine levels of hell and to be honest the majority of prominent Brexiteers could fit into most of them. That said, the lower levels, eight and nine, are the most likely places to find Brexiteers.

So, for example in Level 8 (Fraud), subsection (or "bolgia", as we scholars like to say) 5 we find corrupt politicians. Fair enough. Whereas hypocrites, evil counsellors, divisive individuals and various falsifiers languish in bolgias 7, 8, 9 and 10 respectively. Below that in Level 9 (Treachery), we find that the sinners there are trapped for all time in a frozen lake of woe, much like the UK will be after Brexit.

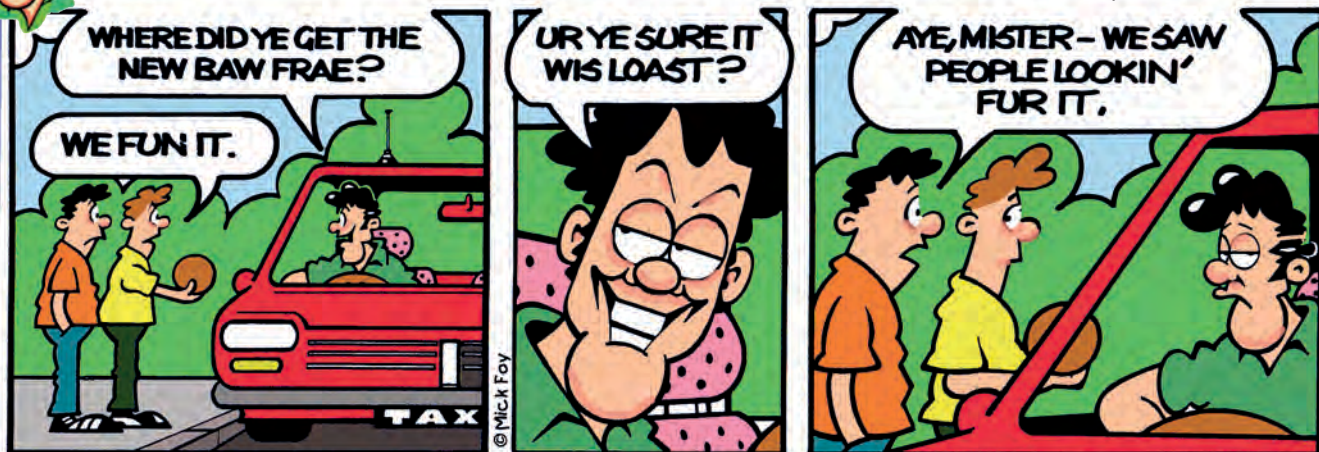
But where specifically should Brexiteers be? My first (charitable) thought was Level 1 (Limbo) where not much happens and no one ever gets anywhere. However, there really has to be a new level, Level 10, especially for Brexiteers and their enablers.

Therefore, in MajorBloodnok's Inferno, this will be called 'Brussels'. Here Brexiteers will have been changed into various types of mildew (not much of a stretch really), and then forced to creep vegetatively through an infinite jar of Tesco Basics 'fruit' jam trying to find a solution to the 'backstop'.

Meanwhile a giant Theresa May dressed as a Robertson's jam gollywog (she doesn't care) will ceaselessly and repeatedly scrape all the mould back to the start every few weeks with a rusty fish-knife, whilst yelling "it's my deal or no deal". FOR ALL ETERNITY.



By Mick Foy





Mons Meg

Personal Astrologer to Chris Grayling

IT IS WELL known that the secret to a successful state is strength, stability, the will of the people and/or democracy, always putting the best interest of the country as a whole first and, come on, a basic knowledge of contract law. That, and the liberal use of war metaphors.

We can see the latter phenomenon in at least one side of the Brexit debate, where leavers have tried to predict how glorious the UK's future will be by referring variously to the Battle of Britain, Agincourt, the Battle of Waterloo, the Battle of Cable Street, the War of Jenkin's Ear and the Battle of Barcelona (Ed. wait, what?). This is to evoke Britain's warlike mettle and general feelings of xenophobic exceptionalism.

However, perhaps the most prophetic reference is to Dunkirk, where the British departed Europe in 1940 in rather a hurry leaving the Scots behind. Obviously I'd agree with part of that prediction. But I rather think the British will never be able to get away, because it's clear the Tories can't even arrange a ferry contract competently, so who's going to pick them up from the beaches?



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by **Fiona
Nicholson,**
**Science
Writer**

Under the

The Value of

VEGANS could be sitting on a goldmine, according to Plant-Based News, where one article suggests that faecal transplants from vegans could be the answer to the growing problem of antibiotic-resistant bacterial infections. Miranda Larbi writes that since vegans eat a varied diet of fruit, vegetables, nuts and seeds, many of which are pre-biotic and probiotic, the gut biome of vegans will consist of a wider range of 'good' bacterial species, in comparison with carnivorous humans. Larbi says "when it comes to fighting off superbugs...vegan poo might be superior to someone who lives off the 'meat and two veg' principal because ... its all about diversity". She adds that since vegans consume much more than the 'five portions of fruit and veg' each day, and include nuts, seeds, nutritional yeasts and other health-giving non-animal foods in their daily diet, "then your gut bacteria is going to be wild"

We know that the gut biome – that mix of bacterial species in our bowel - have many roles to play in the health or otherwise of the human host, including secretion of signalling molecules which travel to our brains and help regulate our tastes, cravings and appetites for specific foods, mediating sensations like pain, and playing a role in regulating the immune system. Each one of us has a unique balance of gut bacterial species. The influence of our gut bacteria and the signalling chemicals which they produce and regulate, on our physiology and our behaviour is so great that the gut is known as the 'second brain'.

However, the strains of multi-antibiotic resistant bacteria which are evolving through our misuse and over-use of antibiotics, can wipe out

our gut biome, leaving us prone to a number of diseases, including the overgrowth of dangerous pathogens. *Clostridium Difficile* is one of the major pathogens which is implicated in the disease process and is one of the main antibiotic-resistant species of bacteria. This bacterium can wipe out most of the pre-existing gut biome in a host, leaving it open to colonisation by other undesirable and disease-producing bacterial species.

Once the gut biome has been disrupted and a bacterial species imbalance occurs, the bacteria themselves can manipulate the host's behaviour in ways that favour the 'bad' bacterial populations. They can send chemical signals to the brain which cause cravings for certain unhealthy foods such as sugary and fatty foods on which these unhelpful bacteria thrive. A number of health conditions as diverse as Myalgic Encephalopathy (ME) and Multiple Sclerosis (MS), Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) and Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), and even Parkinsons Disease are thought to be linked to gut microbial imbalances.

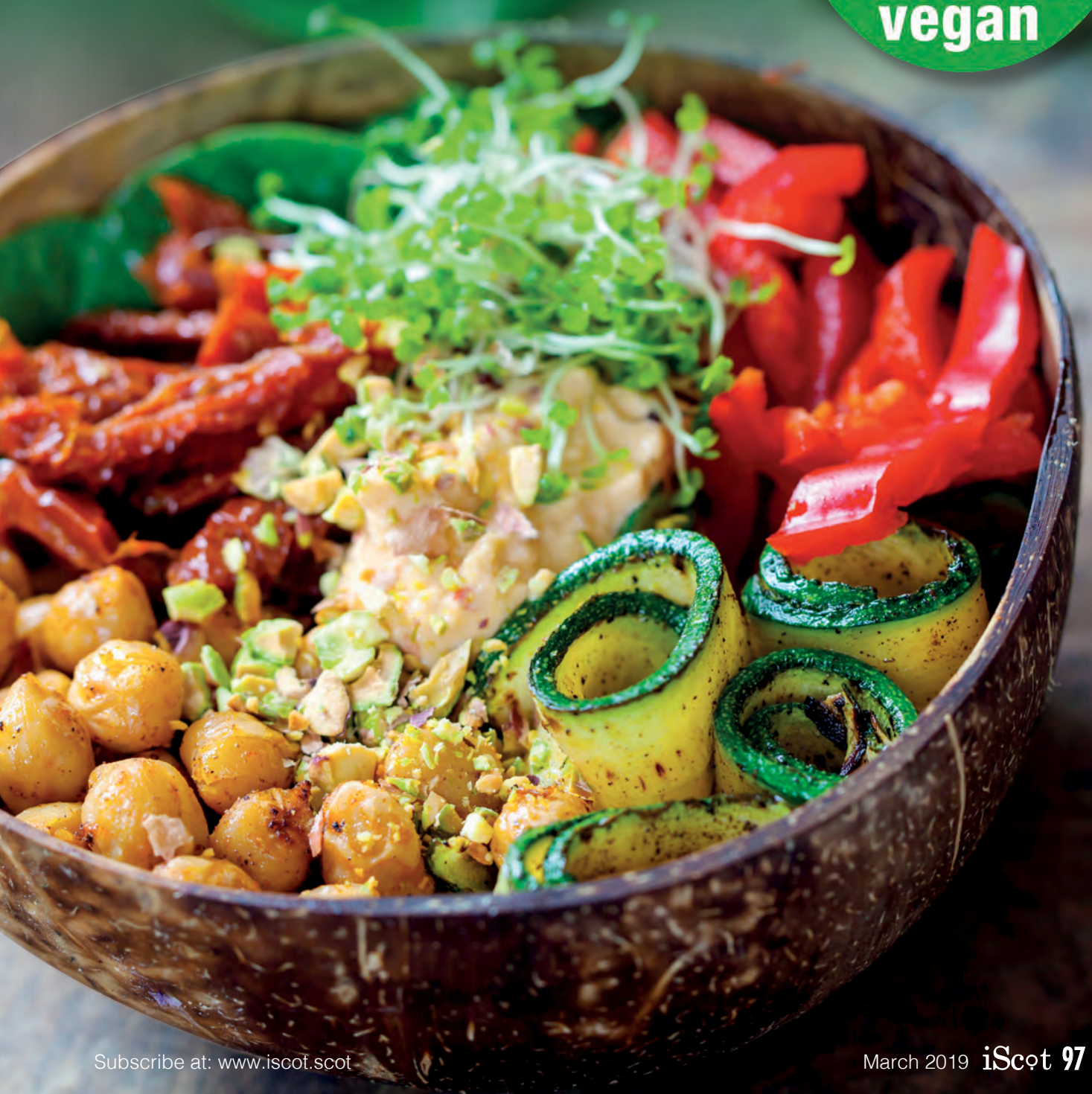
Faecal transplants have been in use for some time now, as a means of repopulating a diseased gut with 'good' bacteria to counteract the effects of *C. Difficile*. Faeces are collected by healthy donors and handed into hospitals which participate in the faecal donation scheme. Donors are screened for health over a period of time to ensure they are fit and healthy and leading a healthy lifestyle, have no mental health problems and aren't prone to obesity. Private clinics are now springing up, as well as NHS clinics. Faecal samples are used to fill capsules which can then be given to the patient. The donor collects samples around three times a week, delivering them straight away to the local faecal transplant service. The samples must be kept free of air, as the gut bacteria are anaerobic, that is they need an oxygen-free environment to live. Samples are refined to separate the bacteria from the waste matter within the faeces and are then added to a capsule. The transplant is delivered into the recipient either by colonoscopy or via a naso-duodenal tube which is passed through the nose and down past the stomach into the first section (the duodenum) of the small bowel. This ensures the bacteria in the transplant are not broken down by the strong stomach acid.

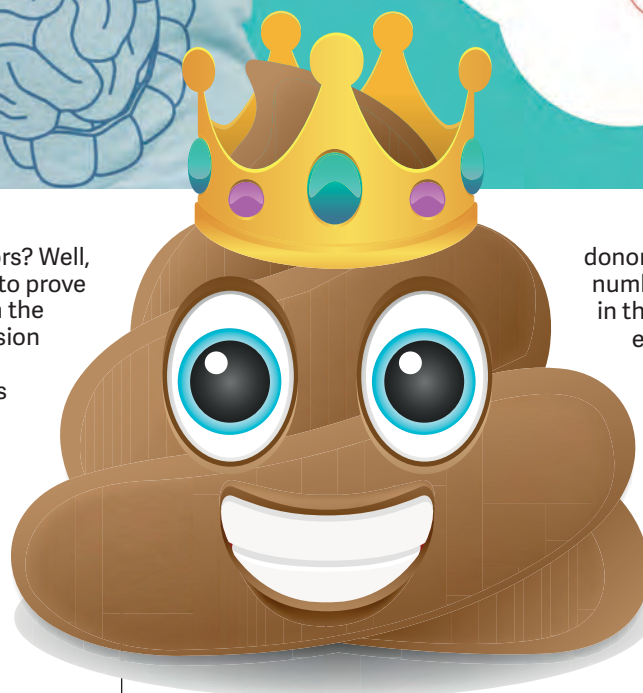
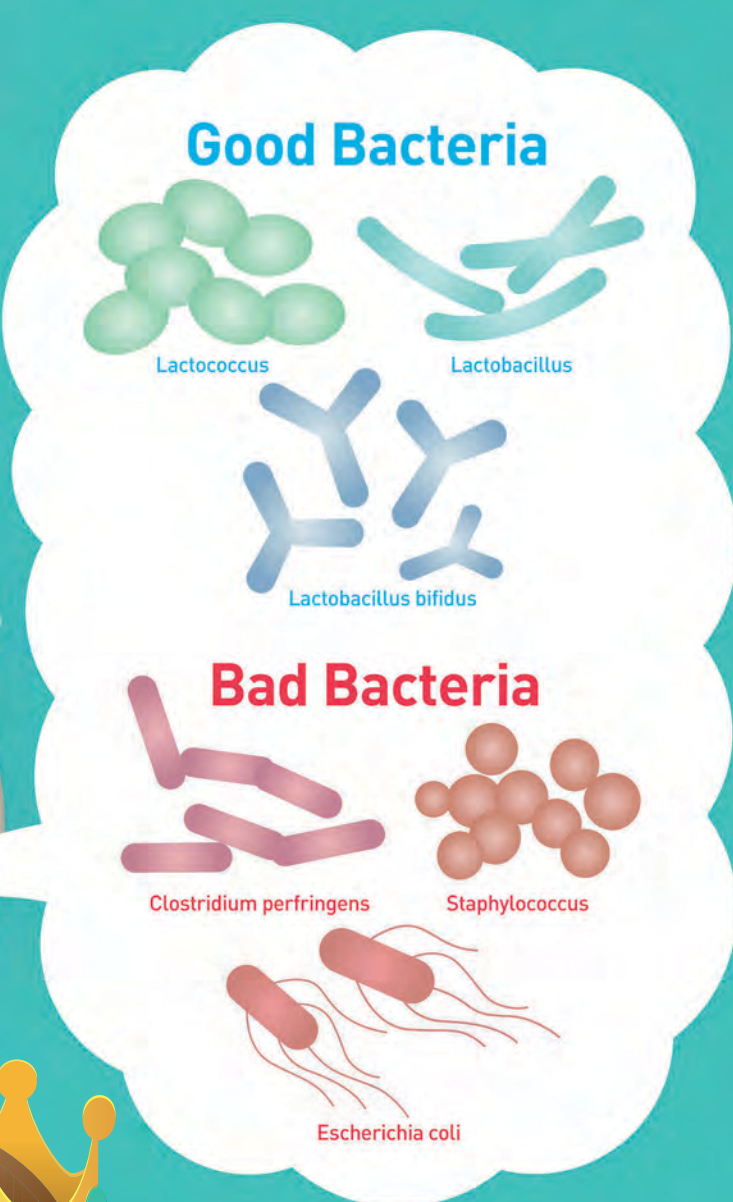
Faeces are collected by healthy donors and handed into hospitals which participate in the faecal donation scheme



Microscope

Vegan Poo!





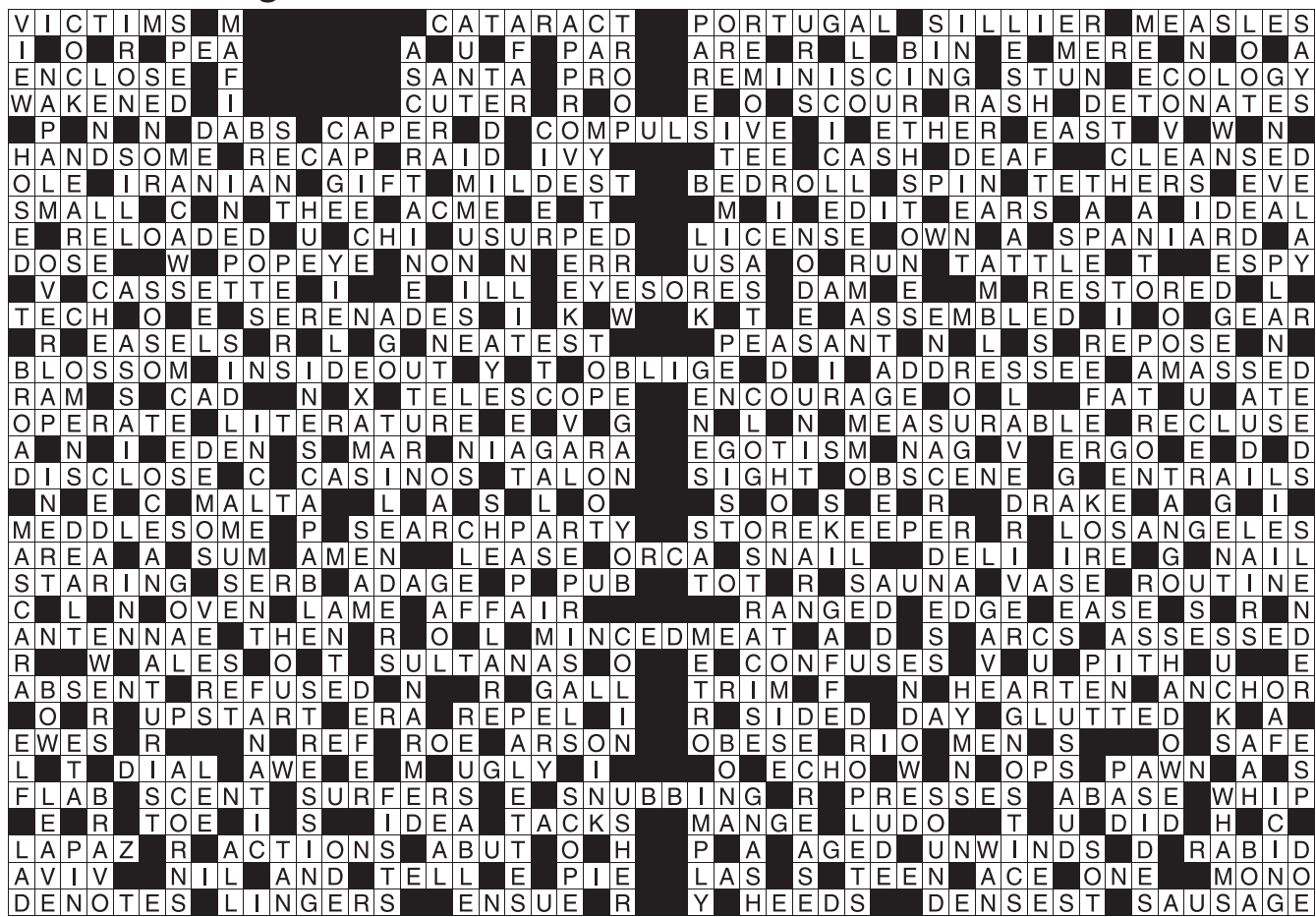
So, are vegans 'superpoo' donors? Well, currently there is no evidence to prove any such positive link between the vegan lifestyle and the possession of a superpoo-producing gut biome. Research to date shows that the important criteria for super-donor-ship are indeed a healthy lifestyle, slim build, and a diverse diet which contains a good proportion of pre- and pro-biotics. But this isn't the whole story. Dr Julie McDonald, a molecular biologist at Imperial College, London, says that a successful faecal transplant doesn't appear to depend on bacterial content alone. Donations from family members appear to be more successful than from non-related donors. Although the research remains to be done, it seems very likely that other components of the transplant are equally important to success, such as the DNA present in the sample from cells sloughed from the gut wall, viruses, and other gut debris. Thus there must be compatibility between

There is no evidence to prove any such positive link between the vegan lifestyle and the possession of a superpoo-producing gut biome

donor and recipient. Also a high number of diverse bacterial species in the transplant will influence how effective it is. "Viruses could affect the survival and metabolic function of transplanted bacteria and other microbes" says Dr O'Sullivan of the University of Auckland, who is at the forefront of research into faecal transplants and their use in fighting antibiotic resistance and various linked diseases.

Research may yet prove that vegans are more likely to be 'super-poo-donors', but perhaps this will be restricted to those who eat a simple wholefood-based diet. Many vegans eat diets which are as suspect as those of the rest of society – indulging in processed meat and dairy substitutes and manufactured supplements to provide some nutritional value. However, it is not far-fetched to suggest that those vegans who eat a nutritious and diverse diet based largely on wholefoods may well become the faecal super-donors of the future. But perhaps it would be more simple for everyone to adopt a healthy wholefood-based diet in the first place, to avoid susceptibility to the diseases for which the faecal transplant is a last resort.

Last month's Big Yin solution



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Wee Numptie solution



SODUKO

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Last Month's Solution

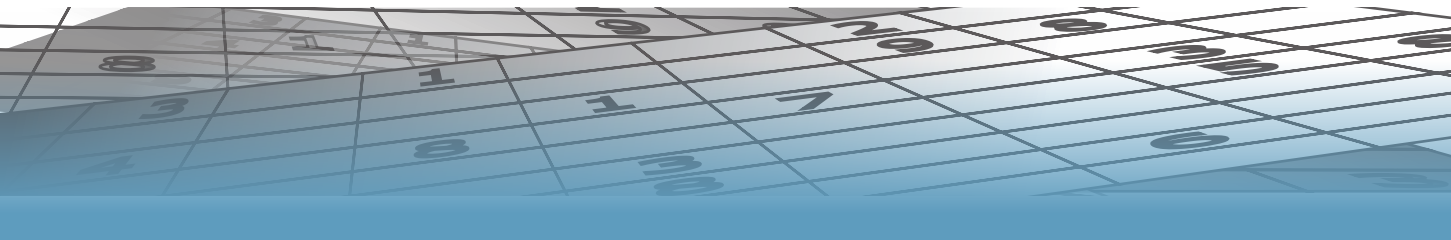
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Last Month's Solution

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7	5	6	3	2	4	9	1	8
6	3	5	9	4	2	7	8	1
2	7	4	1	8	3	5	9	6
8	1	9	7	6	5	2	3	4

Last Month's Solution

Difficult

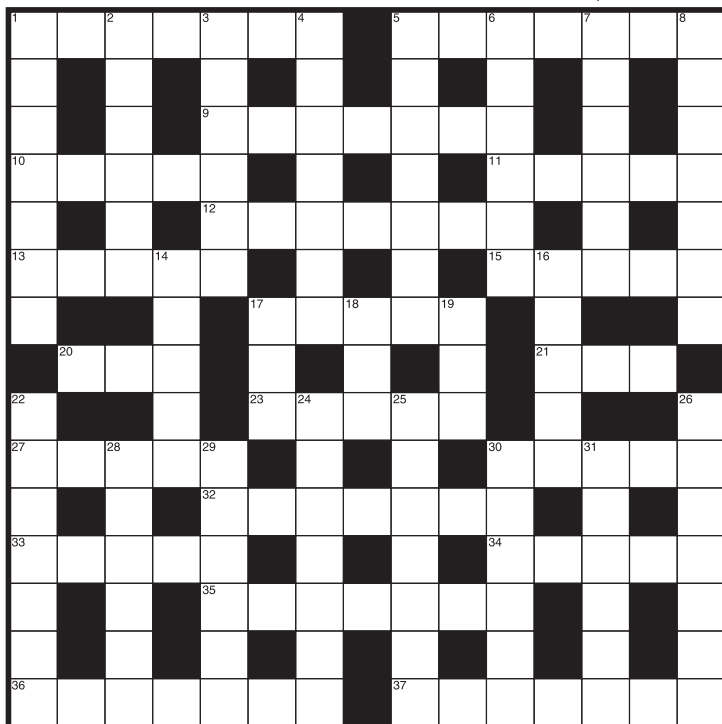
WORK OUT SPACE
WORK OUT SPACE
WORK OUT SPACE
WORK OUT SPACE
WORK OUT SPACE
WORK OUT SPACE
WORK OUT SPACE
WORK OUT SPACE
WORK OUT SPACE
WORK OUT SPACE

7	6	3	5	1	4	8	2	9
4	5	8	2	9	3	7	6	1
1	2	9	8	6	7	5	4	3
5	8	2	6	3	1	4	9	7
3	9	4	7	5	2	6	1	8
6	1	7	9	4	8	2	3	5
9	4	5	1	7	6	3	8	2
8	3	1	4	2	5	9	7	6
2	7	6	3	8	9	1	5	4

Last Month's Solution

		9			8	7		2
		5						6
	8	7		1				3
2	3			5			4	9
1				3		5	8	
8						3		
7		3	9			6		

THE X WORD



ACROSS

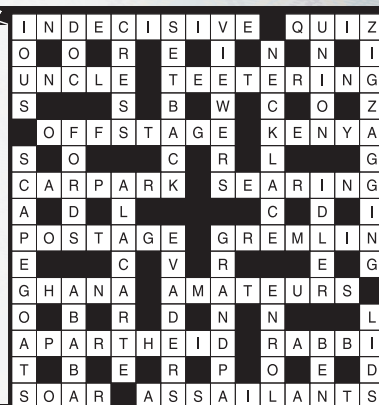
1. Actor/director, Kenneth ...
5. Randomness (3,4)
9. Show of courage
10. Lethal
11. Yearly holidays, annual ...
12. Perpetual
13. Spoken tests
15. Family car
17. Russian emperors
20. In the past

21. Owned
23. Roasted
27. Carried (gun)
30. Collision
32. Knocks back (proposal)
33. Drenched
34. Astonish
35. Set up (machinery)
36. Weirdness
37. Space flight

DOWN

1. Clown
2. Writer, ... Christie
3. Strolls
4. Skies
5. Organiser
6. Cave-dwelling monsters
7. Towards the top
8. Seoul natives
14. Unrestrained
16. Anaesthetic gas
17. Bar account
18. Inquire
19. Distressing

22. Sneeze noise (1-6)
24. Twiddles with
25. Shout
26. Goaded (5,2)
28. Earmarked
29. Solid CO2 (3,3)
30. Biblical prayers
31. Tennis ace, Andre ...



Last Month's Solution

WEE MUMPTIE

ACROSS

1. Funeral garlands
4. Former lover, old ...
7. Reykjavik is there
8. Scratch out
9. Stacked
12. Intermittently (2,3,3)
15. Show up again
17. Inclined letter style
18. Loose pants, ... shorts
21. Notorious affair
22. Dissect (3,2)
23. Rags

DOWN

1. More deserving
2. Take as being true
3. Scorch
4. Melt into the background
5. Airman
6. Outside limit
10. Wooden joining peg
11. Native New Zealander
13. Burns unsteadily
14. Communist
16. Unoccupied
18. Political power group
19. Invitation reply (1,1,1)
20. Angler's throw



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